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ANNOUNCEMENT

The editors of PARTISAN REVIEW are pleased to announce that the prize of $100, offered for the best short story submitted to them, will be divided between Mary King's "My Father Brought Winter" and Delmore Schwartz's "The Statues." Mr. Schwartz's story was published in the May PARTISAN REVIEW. "My Father Brought Winter" appears on the opposite page. Approximately 300 stories were submitted for the contest. The editors would like to cite as close runners-up for the prize, Elizabeth Bishop's "In Prison" (March issue) and James Agee's "Knoxville: Summer of 1915," which will appear soon.

Mary King writes from New Orleans: "The story which you have accepted is the first thing I have had published. I was born in Angleton, Texas. I tried newspaper work for a while and various other jobs one gets in depressions by ringing doorbells, answering advertisements and visiting employment agencies—stenographic and even secretarial. But I didn't like them. Three years ago I came to New Orleans, where I am now living in the French quarter. I settled down to writing seriously, though I had tried it spasmodically before, only last October."

Delmore Schwartz is already known to readers of PARTISAN REVIEW. His work has appeared in *The Marxist Quarterly, Poetry, New Directions, The Southern Review,* and other periodicals. A volume of his verse and prose will be published by New Directions press in the fall.

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MY FATHER BROUGHT WINTER

Mary King

THAT WINTER I used to lie awake and see the house as if it were a long way off, as if I were looking down on it. It squatted on the fields like a spider. The room where the fire burned all night was the spider's body, the stove, its heart. The other rooms were its legs. The legs seemed frozen and dead but they weren't dead, because through the partition I could hear Bran snoring, I could hear my father breathing, I could hear Aunt Freda groaning in her sleep. I used to wonder what we were all waiting for.

Aunt Freda and Uncle Bran were my father's brother and sister. They had a farm near Duncanville. When I got out of high school and couldn't find a job they wrote me to come stay with them. Aunt Freda had broken her hip and was still in bed. She said I could help in the house until I had time to look around for a job. Jobs were pretty scarce and it was hard for a fellow without any experience to find one. I wanted to go to college but I didn't have any money and I didn't know anybody.

It was November when I went to the farm. It wasn't so bad at first. We were four miles from town. I was handy around a house. Working my way through high school I'd learned to do all sorts of odd jobs. They had a couple of cows, and Bran taught me to milk and how to skim the cream and make the butter. He had been doing those things, as well as the field work, since Aunt Freda got laid up. They traded the butter for groceries and kerosene and matches. Something was always happening to the crops: too much rain, not enough rain, caterpillars, or a freeze. They never made more than just enough to live on and pay the taxes, but they had food to eat and a place to sleep.

When I finished the work in the house I helped Bran in the field. I helped him cut sorghum. We tied the sorghum into little shocks like corn shocks, and when it dried we stacked it in a pile behind the barn for winter feed for the cows. It was good to cut. The cane knife felt good in my hand. I kept it sharp as a razor. It cut

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through the stalks almost of its own weight. The stalks fell, and I gathered them together and stood them up and tied them. I used to wish I could gather my own thoughts together so easily. I began to notice the way trees grew out of the ground, as if they were aimed straight, some of them, and going somewhere. I got to noticing all the different shapes and colors that come out of the ground. I'd never thought of these things before.

One evening near the end of November we heard steps on the front porch and somebody opened the door without knocking. We looked up and saw my father. I knew it was my father from his picture and because he looked like me. Bran and I were sitting at the table and Aunt Freda was sitting up on the sofa in the corner where we had carried her supper tray. We didn't say anything, we just looked at my father. I saw that his shirt was dirty and his coat sleeve ripped. He had on a bright blue tie with some kind of big glass stickpin in it. He looked dusty, as if he had walked a long way. We had thought he was dead, but there he stood.

"Well, don't you know me?" he asked. He was grinning in an embarrassed kind of way. He put his bag down and batted the dust from his hat.

Aunt Freda dropped her cup; it broke on the floor. Bran had looked up with his fork halfway to his mouth when my father came in. His face turned so red I thought the blood would burst through the skin, then it turned white. He put the fork in his mouth, laid it down, drank from his glass, and went on eating. I got up and shook my father's hand because he held it out to me, then I sat down again. I couldn't think of anything to say. Aunt Freda said "Bring your father a plate, Vair." I brought a plate and knife and fork from the kitchen and my father drew up a chair and sat at table with Bran and me. He ate a lot. When he helped clear away the dishes after supper he ate the scraps left on the plates when he thought we weren't looking.

I made a pallet for him to sleep on in Bran's room. He went to bed early. I saw him open his bag. There was nothing in it but a couple of dirty shirts and a pair of worn shoes.

Aunt Freda was patching a pair of Bran's work pants when I came back in the room. "I don't know," she was saying, "I don't know . . . what do you think? . . . he's starving, we can't turn him out."

It turned cold that night, and for two days it rained. It was just as if my father had brought the winter. We didn't go out of the house except to feed the stock and to milk. One room in the house had a stove in it. We lived and ate in that room, leaving it only to sleep at night. The stove was the last thing we thought of before we went to

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bed, the first thing we thought of when we woke in the morning. It had to be fed. At night my father would walk back and forth across the room, whistling out of tune, with his hands in his pockets. Once in a while Aunt Freda would say something to him but Bran wouldn't look up from the book or paper he was reading. I could see he hated my father. My father was very polite to him at first.

Winter set in. It rained a lot. There was nothing to do except sit in the house and read. My father tried to help me with the house work. There wasn't enough work to keep one person busy, and he got in my way. He was always puttering around. He never offered to help Bran shell the corn or do anything outside, he never offered to milk. He just hung around the house with his coat collar turned up. The cooking was my job; I liked it because I liked to have something waiting for me to do at a definite hour. But if I went out of the house to do something for Bran before meal time I'd come back and find my father had already set the table and peeled the potatoes and had them on the stove frying. We ate a lot of potatoes that winter.

I grew to hate the sight of my father stirring something in the skillet. He was getting fat, not all over, just his stomach. His legs and arms were still skinny. One of his arms had been broken and set badly so that it stuck out from his body in a half circle when he stirred. His skin was pink, too young-looking for his age. His white hair stood up around the bald spot on top of his head like grass growing around a place where a house has been burned. His eyes were small, set deep in his head, his mouth shut in a thin line bent with smiling. He tried to make his voice sound deeper than it really was. He talked as if he thought we might like to listen to him. He was my father, and he had nothing else to do so he stirred the potatoes on the stove. It made me sick.

"This is my father," I'd say to myself, "he has come back." I hadn't been afraid before, but he made me afraid. If life had done this to him what would it do to me? I had the same blood, I couldn't get away from that. I wanted to get away from him, though. I wanted never to see him again. But what could I do? I had no money. Besides, I was afraid.

So there we all were. . . . Three old ones and a young one in the house tonight . . . getting colder, rain outside and the roads muddy . . . wet in the woods, no place to lie dry . . . no getting away now, no use to think of it. And something inside me that had been ready to jump and run all day would relax and drop its head on its paws like a dog before the fire.

I thought up excuses to myself to prove I shouldn't leave: Aunt Freda needed me, there was too much work for Bran to do alone, I was helping them out and it was up to me to stay. I got to where I

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I wouldn't even go to town for bread and kerosene and matches. My father went instead. He went to find somebody who would listen to him.

The inside of my brain must have looked like that room. . . . The green straw matting burned in spots around the stove, the sofa covered with tumbled quilts in the corner where Aunt Freda slept at night and lay awake in the daytime, the table where we ate in the opposite corner, the clock, and the picture over the clock of a black horse and a white horse tossing their manes in a high wind against a sky shot with lightning. There was a calendar with bright Biblical pictures. In one picture a young man in blue knelt on a leopard skin before an old king in a red robe. " . . . *and I said to the king, if it please the king, if thy servant hast found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldst send me into Judea, into the city of my father's sepulchres that I may rebuild them. . . .*" The only sound the fire crackling in the stove, the clock ticking, and my father's footsteps going up and down.

"Here, I guess you can manage this better," my father would say, passing Bran the softest food at table. My father crunched chicken bones. Bran had been having trouble with his teeth for a long time. Most of them were gone. He would eat the soft things and pretend not to hear what was said to him. When my father had been with us a month and felt more at home he said other things:

"Look at me," he would say, throwing his chest out. "A man doesn't have to let himself go. I'm older than you but I look ten years younger." He would walk up and down swinging his arms, bending over to show he could touch the floor. Bran wouldn't say a word. He acted as if my father weren't there. I didn't blame him.

I grew to depend on Bran's not saying anything. His silence was something hard for me to put my back against, something stable and solid. Then one day I heard him curse. He didn't know I was near him. I came up behind him when he leaned over to scrape a plate of scraps into the slop bucket. His pipe fell out of his mouth into the bucket. He didn't have enough teeth left to hold it in his mouth. He didn't raise his voice as he fished the pipe out of the bucket and took it to the sink to wash it; he didn't sound as if he were angry. The words just came out as if they were already shaped in his mind and he was only going on aloud with what he had been thinking. If he felt that way the whole business must be pretty bad.

There was something terrible about Bran. He was like a man on fire, slowly burning up inside, and he wouldn't ask anybody for help and he wouldn't help himself. I think he wanted it over and done with. He wouldn't go to see a dentist about his teeth. When another

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tooth would get loose he would jerk it out and throw it away without a word.

I remember one day we did get my father out in the field. It was a sunny day, clear and cold. A short second growth of sorghum had come up. It was barely waist high but we couldn't afford to leave it standing. The three of us went to the field to cut it. My father's stomach was too fat for him to work fast, it got in his way when he stooped, and he dropped behind. Bran was ahead. I straightened up and saw him standing still with his hand in his mouth. He stood there in the thin bright winter sunshine working his hand around in his mouth. He brought out a tooth, looked at it, and threw it away. He spat blood, picked up his knife and went on working. My father had seen, too. He laughed, and shouted to Bran:

"Look at you, throwing yourself away! Better be careful. No more will grow where that one came from!"

It was true. Bran was throwing himself away in little pieces over the field. I remembered Aunt Freda said Bran had been a different man when he was young, always laughing and joking, and he'd had the kind of mouth all the girls wanted to kiss. I stood there in the clear winter sunshine, holding my shining knife. I looked around me but nothing was in bloom. A few goldenrods still leaned by the fence but their color was gone, they were old, old! I wished Bran would say something to me with his mouth that girls had wanted to kiss, say it was good to be young no matter what came after.

I still had the room. It wasn't so good in the daytime because I could see through the windows, and I didn't want to see outside. But when we lit the lamp after supper and built up the fire it was like a curtain had been drawn around me. The rest of the world was shut out and I was safe inside. Pretty soon I would have to go to bed and the dark would jump like a cat through the window and sit on my chest, but for an hour or two the dark and all the thoughts that came crowding with it left me alone. For a while I brought out my books and tried to study, but they didn't tell me anything I wanted to hear and I put them away. I'd just sit there soaking in the safety that seemed a part of the lamplight and the heat from the stove. And I'd think 'This will go on forever . . . the three of us sitting by the stove with Aunt Freda on the sofa in the corner.' I used to wonder what had drawn us all together. We weren't a family, we didn't belong together. I thought there must be a reason even if I couldn't see it. But the threads were too tangled. Like a grackle's nest of mixed-up grasses. It all came down to the fact that we had to eat and we had to live. And yet there was a reason for those mixed-up grasses being tied together. They made a whole, and the whole was used for something. Did we make a whole? If we did, I couldn't see it. We weren't being

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used for anything. We weren't doing anything except keeping alive. . . . A log in the stove would burn through and settle, a board would creak somewhere in the house. A family of skunks had settled under the house that winter. They kept up a funny chirruping noise, and sometimes we could smell them. My father would say from behind the stove where his chair was tipped against the wall:

"I remember back in '98 when I first came here with a wagon and team. The snow was hub-deep all over the the prairie. People here never saw such a snow before and they haven't since. I remember. . . . " And his voice would go on for a while, then he'd get up and prowl the floor, and Bran would smoke, and I'd wish my father hadn't spoken, for his words looked back over his shoulder at vague pictures of dead horses and men that troubled me with a time I knew nothing about . . . wheeltracks on the road, harness creaking, voices shouting. . . . And now my father was all that was left of the young men who had come all the way from Iowa in wagons to settle a new country, and his voice died away in the room, and the clock ticked, and the fire burned so hot the back of the stove got red, and Bran put down his pipe and went over and lifted a lid, and the flames leaped up and flickered on the ceiling, and the brightened room showed us each other's faces.

It all came down to the fact that we had to eat and we had to have a place to sleep. Nothing mattered so much as that. I began to wonder if anything else were worth troubling about. I hadn't thought so before.

One morning I went in Bran's room to make the beds. I looked down at my father's pallet and saw his pillow. It looked as if it had hardly been touched. There was only a round shallow dent in the middle of it where his head had lain. I don't know why I noticed it that morning, but I saw it for the first time. I saw my father for the first time, too. I looked right through him and saw nothing, nothing for me to hate. You can't hate a dent in a pillow.

It's wrong for the old to take pity from the young. Even when they don't ask for it in so many words the shapes of their mouths ask for it, their eyes looking out at the weather, their hands quietly doing the things that must be done for living. Bran's hands in the dishwater, Aunt Freda's hands patching a pair of Bran's ragged pants, my father's hands sopping up the gravy in his plate with a piece of bread so as not to waste a drop. Pity is wrong for the young to feel; it drains the sap that should be used in growing. Whenever I felt hate growing in me like hard seed, beginning to push out toward the room and the people in it, toward my own life; when I began to feel braced and strong, a man, not a child any longer, then it would bend and grow back inside me. Pity was the hard wall that pushed it back. The

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small green living hate wasn't strong enough to pry its way through this thing that seemed so soft when you read about it or heard it spoken of, but was as hard as rock. I would think of myself as old, walking the roads, telling the people the things they had believed in weren't true. I would go about the house shouting in my throat:

Preach pity to the people! Stop up their ears with it, stop the leaks in the roof with it, the draft under the door, the broken window-panes! Swallow it for food, choke on it, go to sleep under it, and lie with it carved in hard words on the hard stone over you while the feathers of an owl barred black and white drift down, and the strong green shoots of hate come through at last and laugh in the sun!

Some nights I couldn't stay in the room with them. I knew that if I did, I'd be as old as they, wanting no more than they wanted. And so I'd leave them by the fire and go outside. The road were almost always too muddy to walk, but I'd stand out in the yard and look up at the sky. I thought a lot about God. I'd pray he would trample me in the mud—that would give me something to fight against. I even dared him one night, I double-dared him. . . . You can't fight God.

An old mulberry tree grew by the corral fence. I hadn't noticed it until it lost its leaves, then it was so ugly I had to. It grew straight enough but its trunk was almost girdled by rot. Its branches hung down like broken and twisted fingers. One year they said a hurricane had splintered it. Every summer it was stripped clean by caterpillars and spent its strength putting on new leaves in the wrong season. Often no other tree on the place would be touched, they said, not even the other mulberries. In January we butchered a calf and slung it to a single-tree, running a rope over one of the stouter branches and pulling the carcass up out of reach of the dogs. It hung there swaying from the broken branch like some sort of horrible fruit, scenting the air with blood. We degraded the tree.

In February we had a heavy sleet. All day through the window I watched ice form on the old mulberry tree by the corral fence. What branches remained to it hung lower and lower. I knew they would break before morning if something weren't done. I put on my coat and got the rake from the barn. I beat at the branches and the ice fell in a shower. I worked so hard I sweated under my coat, and all the time I was crying "You've got to live, you've got to live!"

I looked up once and saw my father standing at the window. He had been watching me. He was laughing. "You fool," his face said, "why waste your strength on something that doesn't matter?"

I beat off the ice with the back of my rake until I'd cleaned the

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lower branches, and then I walked away and went in the house without looking back.

That night the sleet changed to rain and the ice melted. When I went out in the morning the tree stood gaunt and black and wet in a litter of broken twigs. I couldn't tell whether it was dead or alive, but I put my hand on the old trunk girdled by rot and thought, Even this rot is good in its way; it's real, you can see it, you can see what it will do. I could see how the tree had fought it. For a minute everything seemed clear, and then I remembered my father's face at the window.

Aunt Freda was always asking me why I didn't go to town and meet some young people my own age, so one Sunday night I got out the Ford and drove in to Epworth League. I didn't know anybody but a couple of boys I had played basketball with on the high school team. I thought maybe they'd be there and I could talk to them. I got there early. A bunch of kids near my own age were standing around outside the church door. I didn't see either of the fellows I knew. I thought of going inside and sitting down, but I could see through the door that the church was empty except for a couple of women and I didn't want to sit in there with them. One of the girls was pretty. She wasn't giggling like the rest. They were all talking about parties I hadn't been invited to and about things that had happened at school. They didn't pay any attention to me. I wasn't a town boy, I guess that made a difference. I couldn't think of anything to say. I had been listening too long. I felt all shut up and dead inside, but I felt too, that if that girl came over and said something to me I'd burst out crying right in front of them. It was a good night. You could already smell spring. A new moon was shining. When the church bell rang I didn't go inside with them. I got in the Ford and drove around for a while so Aunt Freda wouldn't ask why I had come home so early, and then I went home. I was glad to be back in the room. Bran was still sitting up reading his paper when I came in. I sat by the stove for a while and then went to bed.

They were young, and I was young too, but I didn't belong with them.

In March it was still too wet to plow. It rained almost every day. They said it rained more that winter than they could ever remember. Bran couldn't work outdoors, so he washed the dishes. My father wiped them. I guess they were as glad for something to do as I had been. Working together they forgot to hate each other. They would laugh and talk about things they had done when they were boys . . . how they used to herd sheep and jump their horses over the gullies.

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They remembered things together and Aunt Freda was glad, but I wasn't glad.

Now that they had stopped hating each other I didn't see much reason for either of them.

I saw even hate wear down with time under the need for food and shelter. Time like rain fell on the hard clod and it melted and left nothing but muddy tracks on the floor where two old men stood gossiping over a dishpan. I got a bucket and broom and scrubbed the kitchen floor that night but I couldn't wash their tracks out of my mind. I had grown used to their hating each other. I had watched them and fed on their hate. Their hate was the only real thing in the house, the rest was just working and eating and sleeping because those things had to be done. Now they had quit hating each other I felt as if the last thing in the world had gone back on me.

Our land was sticky and black and still too wet to plow by the middle of the month, but I could see the plows going back and forth in the sandy soil across the pasture. The woodpile by the kitchen door was gone. We burned chips and corncobs in the stove to warm the room early in the mornings and in the evenings, letting the fire die down through the day. With the fire out the room changed. It wasn't the same even at night.

I can't explain what spring did to me. I had forgotten what green grass looked like, but grass came up through the winter weeds. I had forgotten the pear trees but they bloomed. I had even forgotten the mulberry tree by the corral fence until one morning when I went out to milk, there was that tree with its top broken out and its branches twisted and hanging down—there was that old tree getting ready to put on new leaves. I stood there with the milk pail in my hand and looked up at the little brown sticky buds. They made me ashamed.

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LOOKING FORWARD TO LOOKING BACKWARD

Meyer Schapiro

IN THE PRESENT slump of socialist theory and with the revival of reformist programs, Mumford's *Culture of Cities** has been welcomed as a major contribution to knowledge and to social thinking. The vast scope of the book, its boldness and breadth of statement, the abundant esoteric documentation, the palatable mixture of social argument and art criticism, the rampant healthiness of the author's tastes, the wonderful timeliness of his appeal for new homes and regional planning, so close to the avowals of the government, all these considerations—secondary to truth and practicality—elevate the book in the minds of its reviewers as a monument of social prophecy and a tonic for discouraged men of good will.

The Thesis. Mumford traces the history of cities since the middle ages in order to formulate the possibilities of the good city of the future. He believes that the mediaeval town was socially and hygienically better than has been supposed, and still offers invaluable suggestions to-day not only as an example of sound urban planning, but also in its democratic communal life; the interests of all classes were harmonized then through their common enjoyment of the rites and pageantry of the church. It was at the end of the middle ages, with the rise of machine technology, despotism, militarism and capitalism, that the city began to assume its present unhealthy and hypertrophied forms. From the "will-to-power" Mumford derives the militarization of the city plan, the great boulevards, the architecture of pomp, the mechanical and unsocial regularity; from capitalist greed and indifference to biological needs, the "insensate" industrial town and the pollution of the whole environment. But during the last seventy-five years a reaction has set in. And in the newer ideals of regionalism, conservation and the garden city, all related to the emerging "biotechnic economy," patterned on the organism, Mumford foresees a new

* THE CULTURE OF CITIES. *By Lewis Mumford. Harcourt Brace.* $5.

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civilization, the creation of which is the chief social and political problem of our time.

This summary gives no more than the large outlines and tendency of the book. Actually, together with *Technics and Civilization* (and a third volume on ethics and religion yet to come), it is an ambitious effort to write a history of modern culture and to set down the principles of a new society. It is conceived also as a work of public education, and is full of informative matter, often curious and delightful, touching on many more aspects of history than are ordinarily treated in books on architecture and planning. Mumford submits to the reader in a vivid, but often pompous, turgid, manner, the notions of advanced architects, city-planners and regionalists, as well as something of new historical research on the past solutions of similar problems.

Society as Style. Although his cultural history and social program are not really distinct, it is convenient for purpose of analysis to consider them separately. The first is especially interesting in its frequent appeal to styles of art as symptoms and data of social life. These styles, for Mumford, are not simply indications of how people thought and felt, they are also clues to the causes and value of the culture and are even regarded as pervasive habits of mind, governing science, economy, social relations and the state. Thus Mumford gives a paramount importance to the concept of "baroque," by which he designates practically the whole of post-mediaeval society from the 15th century to the 19th. There emerges from his description the somewhat vague and shapeless image of the baroque man who eats, drinks, loves, trades, builds and reasons in a baroque style. For the analysis of the changing historical situations of building, trading and reasoning, Mumford substitutes the appreciation of the common baroque flavor of the builder, trader and scientist. Now this is also what he often does with our own society; its evils and virtues are made to flow from the special psychologies of the predatory and the "organic" man. On the whole, he tends to psychologize causes and to moralize effects. Of analysis of social structure or historical events or of the more intimate effect of city life on the arts, there is very little. Yet this writer, who accepts the "baroque man" as a fundamental fact and who appeals to a "resurgence of the organic" as the ground of revolution, rejects the capitalist class and the proletariat as "bare economic abstractions."

Now while there is a value in isolating relatively widespread habits of thought in a culture or period, Mumford's baroque as a stylistic concept is confused and inadequate. In the first place, it is applied to a lengthy period of time which is culturally so varied that

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the concept of baroque can hardly do justice to its historical richness. Even the baroque of a single moment, as described by Mumford, admits the most diverse and opposed qualities. And finally, his method of exhibiting the unity of the baroque rests upon an uncontrolled intuitiveness and merely verbal correlations.

During the last thirty years historians have restricted the term baroque more and more to a specific moment in the arts of the seventeenth century, distinguishing it from the preceding Mannerism and the subsequent Rococo and Classicism. They have also defined within the baroque various types, stages and regional tendencies and given the term qualifying nuances which permit a somewhat more precise historical discussion. Mumford, however, throws all this overboard and, on the assumption that the term is bound to be stretched anyway, extends it over a period of four hundred years to include Brunelleschi and Horace Walpole, Uccello and Turner, and to cover qualities so contradictory that the existing ambiguity of the term becomes a rank confusion and the name is rendered useless for characterization. The baroque is the regular and the irregular, the massive and the minute, the ascetic and the sensual, the anti-organic and the naturalistic. (This ambiguity appears also in the uncertain etymology of the word: "baroque" has been derived from a word for an odd-shaped pearl and from the name of a scholastic syllogistic form). Mumford himself seems to enjoy this union of opposites within his favorite category. But his stylistic license also permits him to obscure the relations of the bourgeois and the aristocratic during this period, and to impose a monolithic unity on the culture. He deduces almost everything from the psychology of the mythical baroque individual, who is at once despotic, military, pompous, gracious, exact, orderly, wasteful, libertine, protestant and authoritarian. The newspaper, the "archaeological cult of the past" and even the clock (which he has elsewhere described as monastic and bourgeois in spirit) are now characterized as baroque. Just as the effort to measure or define the moment is called baroque, the baroque is identified by Mumford with the limitless, and by this psychology of style he moralistically explains the behavior of the time: "the notion of limits disappeared: the merchant cannot be too rich, the state or the city too big"; "the feverish desire to get somewhere" is "a manifestation of the pervasive will-to-power." If we adopted his approach and tried to name Mumford stylistically after his method, we should call him a liberal expressionist with veiled bureaucratic tendencies: he has the closest affinities with Spengler, for if they differ in their conclusions, they are often similar in method and form.

The Method of Analogy. Like Spengler he indulges in a crude

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analogical thinking which at its best may be called *geistreich,* but hardly profound; sometimes it is based on downright misunderstanding. Take for example his deliverance on Renaissance painting that "this putting together of hitherto unrelated lines and solids within the rectangular baroque frame—as distinguished from the often irregular boundaries of a mediaeval painting—was contemporary with the political consolidation of territory into the coherent frame of the state." If by this reference to politics, the forms in painting seem to arise from a field beyond the canvas, although the connection is left vague, on the other hand the political movement becomes stylistic and characterological, like the work of art. But no historian of art will take the comparison seriously, not only because of the flimsiness of the verbal analogy of the political and the pictorial forms and the ambiguity of the stylistic terms, but because of the familiar facts that 1) the rectangular frame is a common mediaeval type, 2) the non-rectangular forms are often regular and coherent, 3) the perspective organization of the pictorial space is known long before the political changes in question, 4) baroque art also cultivates the irregular and non-rectangular frame, 5) and finally, the baroque is used by Mumford to designate art from the 15th down to the 19th century, a period during which perspective, frames and composition undergo pronounced changes and include irregular, boundless and mobile forms.

In the same way, because the processes of mining are "destructive" and "anti-organic," he explains the "general loss of form throughout society" in the 19th century by the predominance of mining; "the destructive imagery of the mine . . . is carried into every department of activity, sanctioning the anti-vital and the anti-organic." We may disregard the mysterious animism of these judgments. But it is apparent that the good architecture of the past has required quarrying and lumbering, which by Mumford's criteria destroy nature, and that cultures sustained by hacking activities have not been without form. Interestingly enough, it is in the practical metal architecture of the 19th century that Mumford finds the most satisfying formal order and the "organic" tendencies of the future. And Impressionist painting, which is for him the culminating point in formlessness, he also values as a manifestation of the organic, as a healthy reaction against the griminess of the industrial city.

Architecture and Society. Although he regards architecture as a simple reflection of society, their relations are anything but clear in Mumford's account. He does not limit himself to architectural forms or uses depending directly on the social objects in question, but dogmatically derives the artistic value of buildings from their social origin. At one point, having condemned the society of the post-mediaeval

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period as anti-vital, he must condemn its architecture as socially dead. This period "shows the fatal lack of connection between architecture and the dominant social sources of order." The proof that "architecture in the social sense was dead" lies in "the series of dusty revivals that took place . . . society itself is the main source of architectural form; only in terms of living functions could living form be created." These banal tautologies and prejudices presuppose an indifference to the qualities of post-mediaeval architecture incredible in Mumford; it must issue from his prophetic zeal, not from his sensibility. When he admires a building, he infers that it is connected with the "dominant social sources of order," or with some still healthy part in a diseased organism; if it is bad, then it lacks such a connection. Hence if he values the work of Richardson (1838-1886), he is led to conclude—on what evidence, I do not know—that this great architect was basing his art "organically on the technical resources and social principles of the new society," and that "he entered deeply into the problems of his age and became familiar with its social and economic forces." Richardson "proved that organically conceived, a railroad station had no less capacity for beauty than a mediaeval fortress or a bridge." But what has all this to do with the social principles of a new society? Richardson in his forms still clung to the past. He used traditional materials and accepted the existing social order no less than the inferior builders of his time. His successful constructions were made for the very men whom Mumford cannot condemn enough as ruthless despoilers of the environment and enemies of the organic. In designing the great warehouse in Chicago for the notorious land-speculator, Marshall Field, Richardson accepted the contemporary city and commercial needs: it was built to suit the interests of a man who, by Mumford's criteria, was personally responsible for much of the evil of the Chicago environment. Mumford betrays himself again when he cites "Berlage's handsome Bourse in Amsterdam as a parallel example of great force and merit"; this is precisely a building which serves the financial functions that Mumford never tires of denouncing.

The criticism of post-Renaissance architectural revivals as a sign of impotence is too easy and superficial; it induces the false conclusion that because we have a style of our own, our society is more healthy and ordered. By proceeding from literature, music and painting in the same reductive spirit, one would have to draw the opposite conclusion. The charge of stylelessness in architecture has been repeated already for a hundred years, but it is becoming more and more evident how much the architecture of the 20th century owes to these revivals and what originality some of them possessed. Their nature is hardly exhausted by their imitative aspect. The values of a geometrical, elemental simplicity are already clear in neo-classic architecture

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(Ledoux, Soane and Schinkel have an imposing modernity); and the Gothic revival undoubtedly affected the modern taste for elusive, incommensurable arrangements and the interest in technical sources of forms, whatever the misunderstandings of the neo-Gothic architects (echoed by Mumford!) about the constructive and functional character of Gothic buildings. Conversely, Mumford tends to accept the programmatic definitions of functionalism uncritically, on their face value. And in assimilating, as he does, modern architectural style to cubism, which is anything but organic and social in his sense, his social judgment of the style becomes even more mysterious and confusing. If republican Germany produced it and the Nazis have restricted its use, it should also be remembered that the Italians have in turn welcomed it as "rational architecture."

Mysticism of the Organic. His stylistic concepts and analogies are not merely incidental to Mumford's program; they are material assumptions and elements of a method which, when applied to our own issues, entail his reformist outlook. Just as he describes the past in terms of a baroque style and lifeless revivals, expressing social decay, so the new civilization is described as an "organic" style already evident in the later 19th and the 20th century, apart from actual economic and social relations. To complete the new tendency, inherent for Mumford in the psychology of new forms of technique and in a spontaneous, unlocalized feeling for the organic, one must rebuild the environment and get rid of bad obstructing habits inherited from the past. "Biotechnic standards of achievement must produce a system of values destructive to metropolitan finance."

There is an engaging historical dialectic in Mumford's conception of the modern "organic style." The universal middle ages are organic on a local, ascetic, un-technological level; the nationalistic, baroque technology denies the organism; then, annihilating and uniting both, the new civilization (our own), regional and international, is organic through greater mastery of technique. But nothing is more unclear than Mumford's idea of the organic. In both books an object is certified as organic if it is alive or extremely complex, if it serves or pertains in some way to a living being, or if it is an institution responsive to the biological needs of all individuals. So, to establish the organic sources of modern architecture, he points to the fact that the Victorian Crystal Palace—a gigantic showcase for industrial arts that by Mumford's standards are anti-vital and decadent—was the design of a gardener inspired by the greenhouse, and that the first applications of concrete were in gardening. But with as much plausibility one might argue that modern architecture has a religious origin since the first building entirely in concrete was a church (1894); or one might say

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that it is basically commercial, since iron and glass were applied together even earlier in the *Halles* and *Passages,* the grain markets and shopping arcades of the early 19th century. His organicizing of inventions and societies is even more subtle. The telephone, the airship and contraceptives are for Mumford organic, whereas the telegraph, the railroad train and the printing press are merely mechanical. Feudalism, in which he mistakenly supposes the class struggle abated under the happy spiritual sovereignty of the church, he considers more organic than capitalist society; in this opinion he joins hands with the modern Catholic ideologues of the corporate state. And in an astonishing passage which we must lay to his historical shortsightedness, he unwittingly presents his organic ideal as a kind of mediaeval totalitarianism; he reproaches Protestantism in the 16th century as socially anti-organic and as having "further destroyed the possibilities of creating a united front."

In his fuzzy organicism, Mumford also cultivates that fringe of inspirational scientific metaphor common among world-saviors and neo-religionists to-day. Like a romantic *Naturphilosoph* he equates the mechanical with the visible, the organic with the invisible—he cites rays, emanations and dreams!—and insists that the latter "are as real . . . as any external phenomenon." The polarity, organic and inorganic, corresponds for him to that of quality and quantity; and he opposes the science before 1870 to science after 1870 as mechanism to organism. Sad dilettante muddle of Whitehead, Bergson and ABC's of the cosmos! He must be aware that the mechanism of the 17th century presupposed particles that no one had seen and invisible attractions through distant space, and that mechanistic physics was full of concepts derived from the experience of the human body; whereas the growth of the biological sciences in the last century has depended largely on the application of the methods of physics and chemistry to the living organism, and it is the classical mechanics which is applied in these sciences.

In Mumford's writings, the polar twins, organic and inorganic, are often nothing but heavily weighted homiletic counters, like the metaphors, life and death, light and darkness, in older religious speech. In characterizing an object as organic, Mumford sanctifies it, endows it with an aura. And in spite of his strenuous espousal of the organic, his social analyses, in their reduction of issues to bare polar conflicts, are often mechanical and primitive, and congested with Newtonian categories of mass, force, inertia and space: "our failure even to contrive a breathing space in bellicose effort is partly due to the inertia of historic burdens."

Political Program. The counterpart of this rousing faith in the

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organic and the emergent is the political abstractness of Mumford's partisanship of a new social order. It is not as if he is bringing us new values which have first to be understood and absorbed; he is reaffirming the long-recognized need for basic changes in society. But when we look for discussion of the means, we find nothing but pious rhetoric or revolutionary bluster. The following is typical: "Instead of clinging to the sardonic funeral towers of metropolitan finance, ours to march out to newly plowed fields, to create fresh patterns of political action, to alter for human purposes the perverse mechanisms of our economic regime, to conceive and to germinate fresh forms of human culture." One might imagine from this passage that he has serious political views; but nothing is more characteristic of Mumford as a social thinker than his general aversion from politics and his unclarity about the nature of the state. The mythical aggregate to which he constantly appeals, the undifferentiated we's and ours' of his tumescent proclamations, are his alternative to class groupings. True, he encourages "political association" as a kind of healthy activity, in the way settlement workers promote boys' clubs (he names Sunnyside, L. I.—alas! —as a model of "robust political life"), and laments that "the saloon and the shabby district headquarters" have been the chief political clubrooms: "One of the difficulties in the way of political association is that we have not provided it with the necessary physical organs of existence: we have failed to provide the necessary sites, the necessary buildings, the necessary halls, rooms, meeting places." But like so many honest reformers who fear the self-interest and blatancy of politics, he wishes finally to preserve his political virginity. Although he acknowledges the existence of the labor and socialist movements, essentially he regards them from outside, as possible aids to the independent, public-spirited reformer. He has adopted some socialist phrases, but is ignorant of socialist literature and its analyses of the questions he deals with. In a patronizing mood, he tells the reader that socialism arose in the slums; on the contrary, it is a product of critical members of the bourgeoisie, of their science and speculation as well as their moral idealism. Its history is only slightly affected by intellectual contributions from the slums. But is there a clearer sign of political naïveté than his regret that "society" hasn't provided meeting places for the workers: "in how many factory districts are there well-equipped halls of sufficient size in which the workers can meet?"

It is typical of his provincial misunderstanding of the relations of politics and society that he can sweep aside the politics of the 16th to the 19th century as "crazy statecraft"; Mumford, had he been there, would have acted differently and is therefore full of regrets in discussing the mistakes of the past. He moralizes on politics, as on everything else. Yet in his own mind he remains a practical theorist

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and expresses contempt for those who do not see the immediate realities: "Plans that do not rise out of real situations, plans that ignore existing institutions, are of course futile: mere utopias of escape." What then shall we say of his own vagueness about the problems of the moment? In one place, excited by the obstacles private ownership of the land puts before sound urbanism, he writes that "public control of land . . . is the outstanding problem of modern statesmanship"; elsewhere, "regional rebuilding is . . . the grand task of politics for the opening generation." But finally, "perhaps the most critical problem for human society to-day is that of diminishing the rôle of the power state and undermining both its pretensions and its ultimately militaristic forms of authority." Yet he deals politically with none of these outstanding, critical problems and grand tasks, and fails altogether to evaluate the difficulties or to throw light on the means of transition. The belligerent talk of revolution in this book is mere bluster in view of his neglect of the cold facts of class power. Mumford does recommend a practical measure: he "prefers," he tells us, "outright expropriation with drastically limited compensation" in the form of pensions to the owners of the land. This "preference" is the sum of his revolutionary political meditations.

The Power and Service States. The key to Mumford's political ideas may be found in his concept of the state, which is based on the writings of Geddes and Branford. In general, Mumford, who is so lyrical about the objectiveness of modern technics, evades names which help to illuminate their objects. He calls feudal absolutism "the baroque state," capitalism "the power state," and democracy "the service state." The power state is that "creation of the baroque imagination" out of which has grown the service state through democratic pressure to "reapportion the existing balance of power within the nation, to equalize the privileges of different regions and groups and to distribute the benefits of human culture." From this account, which seems to substantialize certain functions of the state as an independent state within the state, it would follow that by gradually expanding the service state, one could finally crowd out and eliminate the power state. This is an historically false view of political liberalism, disregarding its bourgeois roots and aims, the close relations between power, interest and service, and the ultimate dependence of the modern state upon the economically dominant class. In the United States, he says, "the activities of the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Commerce, the Forest Service, the Parks Service, the Children's Bureau, are examples of the service state." The service state is thus simply a branch of the power state; when the government builds roads, or promotes commerce, it is a

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service state, when it protects property or makes war, it is a power state. But from which of these functions can we best deduce the response of the "democratic" state, with all its service departments, to strikes, crises and wars? Mumford considers the power state something abnormal and perverse and the service state as proper to society itself; but he fails to observe that if "irrationality and obsessive mythologies" are inherent in the power state as such, the Nazi state has also increased its service functions. Just as his service state has grown out of his power state, we have now the example of fascism growing out of that republican Germany which is for him the highest example of the service state in modern times. It is trivial to identify, as he does, the emergence of the Nazis from this biotechnic paradise of healthy, organically inclined Germans with atavism and pathological traits. Such a view disregards the class tensions, the precarious life of republican Germany, and the fortunes of German capital during the world crisis. On the whole, Mumford tends to confuse not only the particular state functions and the social order, but also the state and the governmental regime. Hence his peculiar metaphors of disease and insanity to characterize the evils of the modern state, as if these evils were mal-functionings of society, weaknesses of a single infected organ, rather than results of the structure as a whole. If he has accepted from radical critics the analysis of imperialism as an economic and political outgrowth of capitalism, he also speaks of it as if it were best understood and dealt with psychologically. Race doctrines are dismissed as "crazy dreams," to be treated as "definitely pathological," like the imperialist desire "to fill out the national boundaries." The educational correctives of this "wanton mythology" are the rational regionalist's facts, the unity of mankind. The present division of world empires he regards, with the have-not ambassadors, as an "intolerable anachronism."

There is in Mumford's book a core of sound and familiar observations: the development of capitalism does indeed entail a more and more thorough socialization of production and interdependence of functions; the state forms more and more "service" departments; and modern economy in its world character transcends political boundaries. But in abstracting these facts from the structure of capitalist society, in neglecting their historical incidence, he lifts them out of the field of class relations in which their reactionary or socialist outcome will be largely determined.

The Basic Communist. Mumford seems in places to accept the socialist and communist goals, but is careful to qualify them by honorable, apotropaic adjectives ("humanitarian socialism," "basic communism," "cooperative communism"), as if to distinguish his own ideals from the unhumanitarian, superficial and uncooperative Marxist

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kind. He is evidently superior to socialism as a political movement.

This bias appears in his incapacity to understand the simplest socialist statements of the same problems. In criticism of Engels on the housing question, he writes that Engels "not merely opposed all 'palliative' measures to provide better housing for the working classes," but held "the innocent notion that the problem would be solved eventually for the proletariat by a revolutionary seizure of the commodious quarters occupied by the bourgeoisie," quarters which Mr. Mumford in his boundless sympathy with the masses rejects as "intolerable superslums." He calls Engels' proposal "merely an impotent gesture of revenge," while his own solution—"increasing the amount of housing, equipment and communal facilities"—he considers to be "far more revolutionary in its demands than any trifling expropriation of the quarters occupied by the rich would be," for it "demanded a revolutionary reconstruction of the entire social environment—such a reconstruction as we are on the brink of to-day."

Let us leave him on the brink and read what Engels actually wrote in 1872 in answer to the Mumfords of his day.

"How a social revolution would solve this problem (of housing) depends not only on the conditions at the time, but also on much more far-reaching questions among which the abolition of the antagonism of city and country is one of the most essential. But since we are not designing a utopian system for setting up the future society, it would be more than idle to go into such questions. But this much is certain, that there exist in the great cities enough dwellings which if rationally used would satisfy the actual need for shelter."

It is evident that Engels did not regard the division of existing space as the "eventual solution," but only as an immediate step and part of a more general expropriation. Like other socialists of his time he foresaw the ruralized city as the real locus of the solution. The criticism of palliatives was not a rejection of all improvements in building —as Mumford would have his readers believe—but an assertion of the impossibility of solving the housing problem of the masses under capitalism, an assertion which Mumford now repeats in this book. But whereas Engels also observed the rôle of philanthropic housing projects in dulling the worker's insight into his social experience, and the military and class functions of the city-planning of his time, and therefore warned the worker against them, Mumford continues like his forebears of the 70's to promote the illusions. If he states again and again that to posit these ideals of housing is to demand a revolution, he repeats no less often that the revolution has already begun, that we are on the brink of basic socialism since Radburn, New Jersey, has been completed. But even here he straddles, and reveals his underlying

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indecision: it is not capitalism which stands in the way of housing, but "unregulated private capitalism."

Mumford's Tradition. He repudiates the charge of reformism, but has not tried to indicate how his position differs from what is currently called reformism, or to come to grips with Marxist criticism of views like his own. He has often acknowledged without critical reservation a deep indebtedness to Patrick Geddes who was undoubtedly a reformist, opposed to revolutionary change. The enterprise of Mumford in writing *Technics and Civilization* and *The Culture of Cities* recalls the series edited by Geddes and Branford after 1917—*The Making of the Future.* Reading their volumes in this series, one is surprised to see how little Mumford has advanced beyond them after the events of these twenty years. He shares not only their reformist views, but even their turn of phrase, their style of thought—although he is more passionate and blustering, more emphatically responsive to the aesthetics of the environment. No doubt their optimistic ideas of reform through good will are still Mumford's. They are regionalists, city-planners and nature-lovers who call upon all men of good will to build a new civilization. Like Mumford, they hold up the middle ages as a period of democracy and organic society. Their reference to de Maistre and Bonald as sources indicates the narrow distance which sometimes separates them from contemporary reactionaries who also speak of regional culture, the unified community and the decentralization of the big cities. And when we read their remarks on the war, with their hopes of a new civilization arising from the defeat of Prussianism, we seem to be reading Mumford's call to war against the fascist states. They link Prussian Militarism and Competitive Big Business in the way people now link Fascism and the Two Hundred Families. Their anti-profiteering and anti-monopoly views were readily turned against the German enemy of the native monopolists. "Prussianism and profiteering are thus twin evils. Historically they have risen together. Is it not possible that they are destined to fall together before the rising tide of a new vitalism? The reversal of all these tendencies, mechanistic and venal, would be the preoccupation of a more vital era than that from which we are escaping. Its educational aim would be to think out and prepare the needed transition from a machine and a money economy towards one of Life, Personality and Citizenship." They even welcomed the war as "a spiritual protest and rebound against the mammon of materialism," the "vastest of social experiments in the problem of coordinating communitary and private interests." We seem to be listening to Mr. Mumford, when we read these lines from a series dedicated to "the Philosopher-Statesman," Woodrow Wilson. It is not simply their acceptance of the war that we recall here, but the way in which their human-

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itarianism was invoked to justify it and to create popular illusions concerning its nature and outcome. Mumford too denounces capitalism; but in psychologizing it, in veiling its historical and social character in moral categories, and in regarding it as almost socialist, he is able to support it. If it includes both power states and service states, it becomes right to support one's service state against the enemy's power state.

To-day, when Marxists, liberals, fascists and Christians all condemn capitalism, Mumford's denunciation is not in itself crucial. It is especially consoling to those who find capitalism intolerable, but the overthrow of capitalism equally unpleasant. He assures them that capitalism is dying and that the new society is already growing up in the form of garden cities, suburbs, new houses and superior streamlined machines, the very things by which the middle class measures its own well-being. The field of revolution lies for him in the fixtures of society, rather than in class relationships. By psychologizing the latter, he reinstates the unattached man of good will, who finds in his spontaneous tastes and sympathies the test of political theories. By treating capitalism as one vast slum or super-slum and the capitalists as vicious or pathological elements, he implies that social work and model resettlements are the effective instruments of change. In his fulsome announcements of pre-arranged social agenda, he is the ideal chairman of the supernational and classless congress of men of good will, a congress at which practical difficulties are evaded and the drums of imperialist war play a humanitarian music.

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DOSTOEVSKY AND POLITICS: NOTES ON "THE POSSESSED"

Philip Rahv

THE TENDENCY of every age is to bury as many classics as it revives. If unable to discover our own urgent meanings in a creation of the past, we hope to find ample redress in its competitive neighbors. A masterpiece cannot be produced once and for all; it must be constantly reproduced. Its first author is a man. Its later ones—time, social time, history.

To be means to recur. In the struggle for survival among works of art, those prove themselves the fittest that recur most often. In order to impress itself on our imagination, a work of art must be capable of bending its wondrous, its immortal head to the yoke of the mortal and finite—that is the contemporary, which is never more than an emphasis, a one-sided projection of the real. The past retains its vitality insofar as it impersonates the present, either in its aversions or ideals; in the same way a classic work renews itself by impersonating a modern one.

Of all the novels of Dostoevsky, it is *The Possessed* which now seems closest to us. Not many years ago what attracted us most were problems of individual morality, of the opposition between society and the private ego, such as *Crime and Punishment* exemplified. Today we find *The Possessed* more congenial to our mood, for it analyses problems of politics and radical ideology that have become familiar to us through our own experience. It is a work at once unique and typically Dostoevskyean. Shaken by the Karamazov frenzy and full of Dostoevsky's moral and religious obsessions, it is at the same time the one novel in which he explicitly concerned himself with political ideas and with the revolutionary movement.

The fact is that it really contains two novels. It was begun as a "tendencious" study of the evolution of ideas from fathers to sons, of the development of the liberal idealism of the thirties and forties of

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the last century into the nihilism and socialism of the sixties and seventies; but Dostoevsky encountered such difficulties in its writing that he finally fused it with his projected *Life of a Great Sinner,* which was to be his major effort on the subject of atheism. For that reason *The Possessed* has two distinct sets of characters, one sacred and one profane, one metaphysical and one empirical—the group around Stavrogin, the great sinner, and the group around the Verhovenskys, father and son, who are defined politically. While one set commits sins, the other commits crimes. Externally—in his melodramatic, sinister attractiveness and in the Byronic stress given to his personal relations—Stavrogin derives from early European Romanticism, but in his moral sensuality, in his craving for remorse and martyrdom, he is an authentic member of the Karamazov family. He is doubled within himself as well as through Shatov and Kirillov, his satellites in the story. Shatov represents his Russian, national-messianic side, and Kirillov his experiments with God.

However, although this scheme allows sin and crime, religion and politics, to engage in a mutual criticism of each other, it is too abstractly conceived to solve successfully the problem of unifying the two themes. Stavrogin is for the most part gratuitously introduced into the younger Verhovensky's political maneuvers; the link between them is often artificial, giving rise to superfluous intricacies of structure and episode.

In its Verhovensky parts the novel reminds us of the most recent political phenomena. It is not by chance that on the occasion of the Moscow trials the world press unanimously recalled to its readers the name of Dostoevsky, the great nay-sayer to the revolution. This occurred twenty years after Dostoevsky's Russia—that realm of wood and dark, furious souls—had been ostensibly demolished and a new harmonious society erected on its ruins. The principles of science and reason had triumphed, we were told. But now the creations of a writer who considered these same principles to be the spawn of Satan were invoked to explain events which science and reason had apparently found inexplicable.

It is not worthwhile, however, to examine *The Possessed* in order to echo the insinuations of the Stalin apologists who have suddenly rediscovered Dostoevsky and the "Slav soul." The "Slav soul" never explained anything. That swollen concept is the product of the psychological romanticism of the Slavophile movement, which substitued brooding about history for making it. Dostoevsky, too, "brooded" in the Slavophile fashion, but that by no means exhausts his contribution to letters. As for those "sympathizers" of Stalin who use the "Slav soul" to prove the innocence of the G.P.U. and the guilt of its

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victims, all that needs to be said about them is that they prove altogether too much. The "Slav soul" is impartial in its testimony; as a supra-historical essence it draws no distinctions between accusers and accused, or between oppressors and oppressed. If you make the unfathomable perversity of the Slav nature your premise, then logically your conclusion cannot exclude any explanation, no matter how wild and incredible; and the "sympathizers" should be reminded that a frame-up of one's real or potential political enemies is among the least of the marvels known to man.

Through reading Dostoevsky no one will ferret out the truth about the trials. About specific events one should make up one's mind on the basis of specific evidence; empirical verification cannot be replaced by whatever insights into the general historical background of the Russian revolution we can derive from Dostoevsky. The revolution explains Dostoevsky infinitely better than Dostoevsky explains the revolution. To look to the author of *The Possessed* for revelations is futile; but much can be learned from a study of the interrelationship between his works and the contending social forces which he combined into such extraordinary patterns. Although this analyst of contradictions, who was ever vibrating between faith and heresy, made revolutionaries the object of his venom, there is a real affinity between them.

If in the past social critics dismissed *The Possessed* as a vicious caricature of the socialist movement, today the emergence of Stalinism compels a revision of that judgment. Its peculiar "timeliness" flows from the fact that the motives, actions, and ideas of the revolutionaries in it are so ambiguous, so imbedded in mystifications, as to suggest those astonishing negations of the revolutionary ideal which have come into existence since Lenin's death. The present-day Comintern, emptied of principle, has converted politics into an art of illusion. Stalin's "socialism" is devoid of all norms; never acting in its own name, it can permit itself every crime and every duplicity. Its first rule is to deny its own identity and keep itself solvent by drawing on the inexhaustible credit of the proletariat. In public the rapacious bureaucrat appears masked as a workingman. Marxism, and not the savage doctrine of preserving at all costs the power of the usurpers, is his official doctrine. It is a similar element of counterfeit, of a vertiginous interplay of reality and appearance, which makes Dostoevsky's story so prophetic in the light of what we know of the fate of the revolution.

In reading it one is never really certain whether Pyotr Verhovensky, its chief revolutionary character, is not an agent of the Czar's secret police. Even as he is engaged in preparing an insurrection, this

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"authorized representative" of an invisible Central Committee, which is located somewhere abroad and which turns out to be a myth, describes himself as "a scoundrel of course and not a socialist." He methodically uses blackmail, slander, drunkenness, and spying to achieve his ends. But what in reality are his ends? Give him state power and you get a type like Yagoda or Yezhov. His plan is to organize a network of human knots whose task is to proselytize and ramify endlessly and aim "by systematic denunciation to injure the prestige of local authority, to reduce villages to confusion, to spread cynicism and scandals, together with complete disbelief in everything and an eagerness for something better, and finally, by means of fires, a preeminently national method, to reduce the country at a given moment, if need be, to desperation." He actually carries out this ingenious plan in the town where the scene of the novel is laid. His pupil Shigalov, a character who fits Lenin's definition of the petty-bourgeois "gone mad," busies himself with constructing—on paper—a new form of social organization to guarantee complete equality. Starting with "unlimited freedom" as its postulate, his Utopia, however, arrives at "unlimited despotism." This throws him into despair, yet he insists that there can be no other solution to the problems of society. A well-born and well-to-do lady, Yulia Mihailovna, dreams of reconciling the irreconcilable in her own person, of uniting in the adoration of herself "the correct tone of the aristocratic *salons* and the free-and-easy, almost pot-house manners" of the youthful nihilists, the system of big landed property with free-thinking socialist notions. (More ideal and more systematic in its hypocrisy, Stalinism has considerably facilitated the efforts of the Yulia Mihailovnas of our time to install an "advanced" society-hangout inside the labor movement.) She is preyed upon by Liputin, an unwashed intriguer, who propounds the theory that there are people on whom clean linen is unseemly. Practising petty usury, he at the same time holds forth in the language of "the universal social republic and harmony of mankind." But the odd thing about him is that he is sincere.

It is precisely through such complex and conflicting motivation that the inevitability of the social breakdown is impressed on the reader's mind. Here the impulse to be rid of a rotting order has reached such intensity as to become *objective;* penetrating into the innermost, the most differentiated cells of human psychology, it has ceased to be incompatible with degenerate habits and desires. In one scene the philistine Karmazinov, a figure through whom the author mercilessly derided Turgenev, describes Russia in terms that approximate Lenin's well-known exposition of what makes a revolutionary situation. In Dostoevsky the revolution appears in self-alienated forms.

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Hence the perception that "Russia as she is has no future" and that "everything here is doomed and awaiting the end" is put into the mouth of his enemy, the man at whom we are supposed to laugh. But in those particular remarks Karmazinov predicts that while Europe, that realm of stone, will last his time, "Holy Russia" has less power of resistance and must fall. "How do you look at the manifestoes?" Verhovensky asks him. "They openly unmask what is false and prove that there is nothing to lay hold of among us, and nothing to lean upon. . . . To look facts straight in the face is only possible to Russians of this generation." There is a slight miscalculation of the time factor here, but in that respect even Marx was frequently wrong. It took several decades longer before looking facts straight in the face became so widespread as to deprive the traditional order of its capacity to defend itself.

Setting out to report on the moral depravity of the revolution, Dostoevsky was nevertheless objective enough to demonstrate that Russia could not escape it. The infidel, the *social* philosopher in him, would not be submerged. If it is true, as has been charged, that there was a good slice of the flunkey in his personal psychology, then he was the kind of flunkey, or rather super-flunkey, who even while bowing and scraping says the most outrageous things to your face. This novel, which so delighted the autocratic regime, in reality generalized its downfall in the sphere of values and personal relations.

Dostoevsky was a reactionary, but never a conservative; and with the other great cultural reactionaries of the bourgeois epoch he shared that insight into the corruption of modern society which at several points relates them to revolutionary thought. The philosophy of the present is ever the philosophy of narrow minds—only from the standpoint of the past or of the future is it possible to criticize that which exists: yet the past, having been historically vanquished by the present, must in practice come to terms with it. In that sense the great reactionaries have been the great romantics; but the fact that history has rejected and often put to equivocal uses their hankering after the irremediable organicism of earlier ages did not prevent them from living their nostalgias in art and thus renewing its imagination.

In *The Possessed* liberalism receives the broadest and most perspicacious criticism in the history of the novel. The malevolence with which the portrait of the intellectual Stepan Trofimovitch, the elder Verhovensky, is executed, in no way detracts from its enduring reality and social truth. This characterization has enormous contemporary meanings. It is only now, as fascism is heavily penalizing Western

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culture for subjecting itself to the timorous and accomodating counsels of the liberals, that we can fully appreciate Stepan Trofimovitch.

A gentleman pacifist and esthete, he simultaneously shines the boots of reaction and revolution. His standing protest he makes by lying down; he is subtle in his feelings, a self-indulgent humanitarian, and a parasite. His author created him with unsurpassed verve, wholly persuading us that his creation is objective. He is superior to Thomas Mann's Settembrini, whose distant relative he is, for he is understood not argumentatively but through a tangible social milieu. Dostoevsky boldly reduces him to his primary political elements while holding him together on the spiritual plane in a delicate equlibrium. And what a hazardous yet just simplification it was to place him in the position of being the charge of a rich and patrician lady, of making an assertive dramatic image out of her financial support of him. This exchange of cash and culture, however, is not conceived as a simple transaction; on the contrary, it entails mutual distrust, bitterness, and emotional tempests—but in the end a sentimental reconciliation is effected. In virtually the same terms Trotsky defines the basic relation of the intellectuals to the bourgeoisie in his *Literature and Revolution.*

Stepan Trofimovitch is a typical modern figure, a liberal ideologue dispossessed by the social process and obstructing it. Are you interested in the quarrel between the defenders of "pure art" and its alleged political vulgarizers? Stepan Trofimovitch has much to say on this subject. Time and again he maintains that "Shakespeare and Raphael are more precious than the emancipation of the serfs, more precious than Nationalism, more precious than Socialism, more precious than the young generation, more precious than chemistry. . . ." He is willing to acknowledge the absurdity of the term fatherland and the harmful influence of religion, but "firmly and loudly" he declares that "boots are of less consequence than Pushkin." To this day the esthetes, insofar as they are secure in their possession of boots, display a scorn for such objects out of all proportion to their love for Shakespeare and Pushkin. (The aging Verhovensky was an erudite man, yet his knowledge of history was defective. Without the self-definition of the national principle, neither Shakespeare nor Pushkin could have burst the fetters of medievalism, just as without socialism the future is unlikely to emulate the past with Shakespeares and Pushkins of its own.)

In *Fathers and Sons,* Turgenev's Bazarov, the prototype of the nihilists in Russian fiction, held the view that a good chemist is worth twenty poets. But Bazarov's nihilism was only a form of moral empiricism; he was an individualist who had not yet grown to the level of political thought. A few decades later, in the seventies, the adversaries of Stepan Trofimovitch had already translated Bazarov's moral em-

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pirism into the formulae of the class struggle. During the Fête—the description of which includes the novel's most superb scenes—Stepan Trofimovitch defies the political mob by shouting at them, "What is more beautiful, Shakespeare or boots, Raphael or petroleum?" The reply is rude but amply deserved. *"Agent provocateur,"* they growl.

In his generalizations Dostoevsky recognized no differences between liberals, nihilists, and socialists. But within the living organism of the novel he distinguished clearly between the elder Verhovensky and his revolutionary son. Paternity in this case is symbolic of a relation of ideas. The socialist doctrine negates liberalism even as it grows out of it. In an historical sense what Pyotr represents is his father's ideas thought out to their logical conclusion, but for that very reason he becomes his father's enemy.

What kind of revolutionary, however, is Pyotr? According to the Marxist critic, Vyacheslav Polonsky, there is nothing realistic in the picture of the revolutionary movement given in *The Possessed*. Here Polonsky, it seems to me, is falling into that critical routine with regard to Dostoevsky which has become habitual with Marxists. Instead of perceiving the particular significance of Dostoevsky, in that more than any other writer he concentrates within himself the ideological possibilities of literary art, Marxist criticism has been inclined to ignore and disparage him; and in doing so it has permitted the immediate political advantage thus obtained to distort its basic method. "A poisonous genius," said Gorky—partly true, but no more than a statement of dislike and fear. Lenin devoted several articles to Tolstoy, but so far as I know, never concerned himself with Dostoevsky.

The biographers of Dostoevsky tell us that the activity of Pyotr Verhovensky's circle in *The Possessed* is an imaginative imitation of the Nechayev episode in Russian revolutionary history. Now in Nechayevism the Russian revolution had its first taste of Machiavellian deception and double-dealing. Just as Verhovensky acted without principle and out of relation to any definite theory of social reconstruction, so Nechayev believed that it was his "exclusive task to destroy the existing system—to build up is not our task." Nechayev systematically cultivated criminal methods (which are utterly different from the methods of illegal struggle) in the pursuit of his revolutionary ends. Verhovensky's murder of Shatov is patterned after Nechayev's murder of the student Ivanov; and if we know that one section of the Catechism of a Revolutionary, composed by Bakunin and Nechayev, called for "acquaintance with city gossips, prostitutes and other private sources" for gathering and disseminating information and rumors, we realize to what an extent, even to the repetition of comic details, the archetype of Nechayev is reproduced in *The Possessed*. Where Dosto-

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evsky's bias came in was in presenting Nechayev as typical of socialism; in selecting data from life, he was oblivious to the thousands of examples of idealistic self-sacrifice which the class war in Russia had to show. "Tendencious" in that vital respect, he was realistic, however, in his social sensitivity to one particular and highly important element of the Russian revolution whose recent recrudescence lends his novel its singular interest.

The actions of Nechayev-Verhovensky are divorced from democratic principle and scientific theory because he is essentially a belated Jacobin separated from the proletariat. In point of fact, Nechayevism developed at a time when the industrial proletariat had not yet crystallized within Russian society. Since he has no real historic validity, Nechayev-Verhovensky is stripped of moral norms. His peculiar "madness" is determined by the fact that he strives to substitute his own sovereign will for those formidable class forces which alone are capable of consummating revolutionary changes. While confusing and compromising it, this type serves the revolution before the seizure of power as one of its part-time agents; but after the seizure of power, if given conditions encourage him to breed and grow, he turns against the revolution and seeks to divert it from its original course. In the Thermidorean period, rising to the surface of social life, he seizes control.

Now Stalinism is, in one sense, Nechayevism plus state power. Stalinism, too, acts "for the masses" instead of with and through them; equally divorced from democratic principle and scientific theory, it strives to manipulate the historic process by means of criminal methods and bureaucratic cunning. Nechayev-Verhovensky's attempt to overthrow the Czar without the active intervention of the masses is equivalent to Stalin's attempt to build socialism in Russia in isolation from the fate of the international working class. The Marxist movement, on the other hand, distinguishes itself from the Jacobin and Blanquist types in that it is "the first one in the history of class societies which in all its factors is calculated upon the organization and initiative of the masses" (Luxemburg). The strong resemblance between Nechayev-Verhovensky and Stalin-Yezhov is to be explained, to my mind, by the coincident manifestations of two specific phases in Russian politics. *If Nechayevism represents the pre-Marxist stage of the revolution, Stalinism represents its post-Marxist one.*

In Stavrogin and his alter egos, Kirillov and Shatov, Dostoevsky was imitating his own obsessions. As against radicals like Verhovensky and Karmazinov, they personify the "pure" Russians. Shatov, for instance, becomes the spokesman of the national destiny. What is a

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Russian like and what is his mission—that is the problem which torments him.

Three times, in *Fathers and Sons,* Turgenev essayed to define the "typical Russian," and each time he betrayed his sense of inferiority toward the West and the complacent, moderate cast of his sensibility. (The three definitions occur in subordinate verbal constructions: *a.* " . . . a coarse, half-educated, but not ill-natured man, a typical Russian"; *b.* "the only good point in a Russian is his having the lowest possible opinion of himself"; *c.* " . . . a young man at once progressive and a despot, as often happens with Russians.") Dostoevsky was outraged by Turgenev's common sense and by his insistent depreciation of Russia. Into his own conception of Russia and Russians he injected his characteristic emotion of extremity. The Russians are to him a kingdom of priests and a chosen people; even God is appropriated to its uses. In Shatov's scheme of things God is merely "the synthetic personality of the whole people, taken from its beginning to its end." But these national visions anticipate much that Europe was to experience later. Stavrogin's psychic conundrums—"his life, so to say, of mockery"—prefigure many of the tendencies in twentieth century—especially post-war—European literature.

To Dostoevsky's characters ideas are a source of suffering. Such people are unknown in countries like America, where social tension is at a relatively low point and where, in consequence, the *idea* counts for very little and is usually dismissed as "theory." Only in a society whose contradictions are unbridled in temper do ideas become a matter of life and death. Such is the historical secret of that "Russian intensity" which Western critics find so admirable. Alyosha Karamazov, for example, was convinced "as soon as he reflected seriously, of the existence of God and immortality, and at once he said to himself: 'I want to exist for God, and I will accept no compromise'." In the same way, adds Dostoevsky, "if he had decided that God and immortality did not exist he would at once have become an atheist and a socialist." As simply as that. And in *The Possessed,* Kirillov decides that God "is necessary and must exist," but at the same time he knows that "He doesn't and He can't." "Surely," he says, "you must understand that a man with two such ideas can't go on living." Kirillov shoots himself.

Dostoevsky decided against socialism on a principled metaphysical basis. His antipathy to it, however, had nothing in common with the banal objections of conservative householders. What he feared most was its rationality. He understood that "socialism is founded on the principles of science and reason. . . that it is not merely the labor question, it is before all else the atheistic question, the question of the

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form taken by atheism today, the question of the tower of Babel built without God, not to mount to Heaven from earth, but to set up Heaven on earth." Nevertheless he was as much fascinated as repelled by the demonstrations of reason. Like Stavrogin, he never really attained the peace of religious faith, and when he believed he did not believe that he believed. He hated socialism because it objectified his lack of belief and his heretical love for the boundless expansion and change of which the human mind is capable. In his compulsion to test theory by practice he came close to the methods of the revolution; and when he subjected Christianity to this rigorous test he found that only *an idiot* (Prince Myshkin) could possibly succeed in leading a Christian life. His plebeianism was another element that tended to subvert his support of the autocracy and the church. In his work we do not experience that sense of social hierarchies which affects us so strongly in Tolstoy. The plebeian world-feeling is one of the essential conditions of heresy, and the spiritual equality which reigns in Dostoevsky's novels seems like a kind of inverted socialism, a commune of the spirit.

For his ideological power Dostoevsky paid by his exclusion from the sensuous-material world. He gives us sensations of time, but not of space. He has a prodigious appetite for people, but he is insensitive to textures and objects; his characters are morally sensual, not physically. This over-production of spirituality makes for a constant inner crisis, for a "moralizing and analyzing attitude" which shuts him off from nature. It is this quality which permits his narratives their break-neck pace—there is no need to stop when there is nothing to look at. The excessive sociability of his people has the same source. Criticism has often observed how perpetually dependent they are on externalization through talk and debate. Even in committing suicide they are not alone, and a love-scene seldom takes place without the presence of a third person. Dostoevsky stages his climaxes only after he has assembled his characters into one room: his novels are constructed like plays.

In his preface to Edward Hallett Carr's biography of Dostoevsky, the Soviet critic, D. S. Mirsky, expresses his gratification with Carr for "showing up," as it were, his subject. Carr had laid great stress on the literary and Romantic antecedents of Dostoevsky, and Mirsky concludes that Dostoevsky is "modern only insofar as the term modern can be extended to Rousseau, Byron, and Benjamin Constant." He was produced by Russia precisely because she was backward and because "he was a belated parallel in his country to what the Romantics

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had been in the West." To Mirsky it seems that by labeling Dostoevsky the belated Romantic of a backward country he has removed him from the terrain of the modern; what he has further in mind, of course, is to connect him with the reactionary tendencies of the Romantic movement in Germany and to a lesser extent in France.

In relating Dostoevsky to Romanticism in the way he does, Mirsky suggests the use of the dialectical "law of combined development." But to invoke this law is to disprove Mirsky's approach. The "law of combined development" explains why a bourgeois revolution, when it occurs in a backward country, tends to go beyond itself and be transformed into a proletarian one. A backward country is thus enabled to make up for lost time and outstrip its advanced neighbors, at least politically. In one bound it leaps from the status of pupil to the status of teacher. There is no reason, however, to confine this phenomenon of accelerated mutation to politics. It also operates on the spiritual plane. To say, then, in this sense, that Dostoevsky was a belated Romantic does not at all mean that the Romantic world was his world or that he restored the Romantic state of mind.

Why is the Russian novel of the nineteenth century so great in its achievement? If the "law of combined development" has any application here, it would point to the need of the Russian novelist *to think his way out* from the historical impasse into which backward and catastrophic conditions had driven his country. This same need impelled him to augment his equipment by "taking over" as rapidly as he could the acquisitions of Western culture. Even when he repudiated this culture, as Dostoevsky did, he was strongly affected by it. Before rejecting it he first had to acquire it.

To recognize the achievement of the Russian novel of the nineteenth century is to recognize Dostoevsky's supremacy as a modern writer. His one rival is Tolstoy. Only dogmatists of progress, who conceive of it as an even and harmonious development, can presume to commit Dostoevsky to a museum of Romantic antiquities. It is true that he labored to give his genius a religious sanctification, that in his philosophical and political views he ran counter to progressive thought. But it must be kept in mind that in the sphere of imaginative creation progress does not simply consist of knowing what is true and what is false from the standpoint of materialist science. Dostoevsky not only renovated the traditional properties of Romanticism, but also discovered inversions and dissociations in human feeling and consciousness which to this day literature has but imperfectly assimilated. Reactionary in its abstract content, in its aspect as a system of ideas, his art is radical in sensibility and subversive in performance.

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Moreover, Romanticism is far from being so dreadful as Mirsky makes out. Its impulse was partly reactionary, of course, but in approaching the old values through the self-consciousness of the new epoch, it responded to new emotions and invented new themes. There are numberless examples of this dual function of Romanticism. Chateaubriand, for instance, was faithful to throne and altar; he set out to defend tradition and belabor Rousseau. "I am not like Rousseau," he wrote in the introduction to *Atala,* "an enthusiast over savages. . . . I do not think that pure nature is . . . beautiful. . . . I have always found it ugly. Let us paint nature, but selected nature (*la belle nature*). Art should not concern itself with the imitation of monsters." This declaration, however, as Saint Beuve noted, was belied by the actual content of *Atala,* in which one meets a crocodile on virtually every page.

Dostoevsky's "crocodiles" are *thinking* men.

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THE SOVIET CINEMA: 1930-1938

Dwight Macdonald

WHEN Eisenstein's *Potemkin* was released in 1925, it made an international sensation. Even Hollywood was impressed by its power and originality; Douglas Fairbanks, Cecil B. de Mille, and other American movie celebrities made pilgrimages to the Soviet Union. In more intellectual circles, it was recognized at once that the cinema had at last spoken in its own language. The building up of a rhythmic structure in the cutting room ("montage"), the use of real settings and non-professional actors, the use of pictorial symbols corresponding to Wagner's musical 'themes,' the abandonment of the old literary-theatrical unilinear narrative in favor of a many-threaded episodic development ("the compound plot"), the emphasis on the mass rather than the individual protagonist—these radical innovations freed the cinema from its bondage to the theatre and gave it for the first time its own esthetic. It was soon evident that *Potemkin* was not a happy accident, but rather the first product of a new school of cinema which had grown out of a rich soil. The freshness, the vitality, the scientific vigor and intelligence of the new Soviet society received their highest expression in the cinema of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovzhenko, Vertov, Kozintsev, Trauberg, Kuleshov, and the other Soviet directors. In the next few years the Soviet Union produced one film after another to which the adjective "great" could scrupulously be applied.

Those were the years when one went to the 'little' movie houses which showed Russian films as one might visit a celebrated cathedral or museum—reverently, expectantly. One joined a congregation of *avant-garde* illuminati, sharing an exhilirating consciousness of experiencing a new art form—many, including myself, felt it was *the* great modern art. In the darkened auditorium of the theatre, one came into a deep and dynamic contact with twentieth century life.

The excitement of those years seems far away today. In the last ten years, Eisenstein has made in Russia only one film, which was destroyed by the bureaucracy on political grounds. Pudovkin and Dovzhenko have made some interesting failures. In the space of a few years, the great directors have been successfully discredited as

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"formalist" and "bourgeois," their concepts about the abstract use of sound denounced as heretical, and they themselves—the final turn of the screw which Stalin so well knows how to administer—have publicly recanted and publicly hailed as the highest summit of cinematic art a talkie—*Chapayev*—which might have come out of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios. The big film jobs have long been assigned to the members of the so-called 'Stalin School'—second rate talents which have been able to adapt themselves more successfully to the political requirements of the regime. Their films differ from those of Hollywood only in being technically less competent. Every single one of the radical innovations which Eisenstein and his peers introduced, and which were the base of their entire theory of cinema, every one has been discarded—officially proscribed, indeed. Montage is hardly a memory, the professional actor has been reinstated, the camera stays timidly inside the studio walls, the photographed play or novel has come back, and the slightest effort at experiment is a state offense. Any attempt to rebel against this degeneration is denounced as 'formalism,' an affair for the police. As for the mass-as-hero, most socially significant innovation of all, one has but to see a film like the recent *Peter the First* to understand who is The Hero in the Russia of Stalin.

In 1928, Eisenstein and Pudovkin issued a manifesto denouncing the realistic use of sound in the cinema and outlining a new "contrapuntal' approach, based on montage, which promised to revolutionize the sound film as their theories had already recreated the silent cinema. In 1928, Trotsky was exiled, the other makers of the 1917 revolution were humbled, the Stalinist clique assumed full power, and the first Five Year Plan was launched. In 1930 the Plan was extended to the cinema, the production of sound movies was begun, and the bureaucracy swept all branches of the industry under the control of a single "All Union Soviet Film Trust." Every one except a few Trotskyist grumblers expected that great things would be done with sound, and that the new trust would enormously increase production. But even the severest critics of Stalinism could hardly have been prepared for the debacle that followed. Eisenstein and Pudovkin in 1928 predicted that the capitalist cinema would use sound "according to the laws of least resistance" and that the commercial sound film would enter into "a terrible . . . epoch of automatic utilization for 'high cultural dramas' and other photographic performances of a theatrical nature."[1] Their prophecy has come true, but for their own cinema as well.

The bureaucracy, however, worries not at all about this sort of degeneration—in fact, it can say with F. D. R., "We planned it that way." What they did not plan was a chronic crisis in production, which year after year fell far behind the 'norms' of the Five Year Plan.

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This paralysis reached a climax last year, when just 25 full-length feature pictures were released, as against the 123 called for by the Plan.[2] Stalin followed his usual course: he dismissed as a 'wrecker' Shumiatsky, the all-powerful chief of the movie trust, whom he had set up as dictator in 1930—and who had, of course, been faithfully carrying out his directives ever since.

Quantitatively and qualitatively, the Soviet cinema has been in a state of crisis, varied with periods of collapse, ever since 1930. The roots of this condition go deeper than Boris Shumiatsky, deeper also than pure esthetics. It is true that no art form can maintain itself at a high level indefinitely, and that the causes of its decay are sometimes largely technical. But this decline has set in not after the possibilities of the new approach had been exhausted, but after only five years of growth and at the moment when the introduction of sound seemed to open up vast new fields for development. It came also with peculiar swiftness— as abruptly as an electric light is switched off. The clue to the decline of the Soviet cinema is to be found in politics and not in esthetics.

* * *

The Early Years

The pre-Revolutionary Russian cinema was a poor relation of the European industry. French capital financed the State railroads and the Putilov Steel Works, and French capital—the great firms of Gaumont and Pathé—controlled most of the Russian movie industry. The few films that were made in the small, antiquated Russian studios were provincial imitations of the European commercial product. When the Bolsheviks took power, *Kino-Gazetta,* trade paper of the Russian movie industry, issued an editorial warning against "the grave consequences that will result from the government's seizure of the cinema." "The art of the cinema will be destroyed," stated *Kino-Gazetta,* adding, somewhat obscurely, "Barter and speculation will replace pure art."[3] Most of the actors and directors emigrated with their employers. Unlike the theatre, where Stanislavsky and Meyerhold were in full career at the time of the Revolution, the cinema had to be built up on entirely new foundations. Protazanov is the only important Soviet director whose career bridges the Revolution. Before 1917, Eisenstein was a student of engineering, Pudovkin an industrial chemist, Dovzhenko a painter.

The cinema was at first put under the control of the Supreme Economic Council, which treated it neither as art nor propaganda but, with bureaucratic bluntness, as a branch of light industry. Not until the summer of 1919 was the cinema nationalized. At this time, it was transferred to the jurisdiction of the People's Commissariat of Education, a sensible move. But in all these years of War Communism, very

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little could be done with the movies, partly because the Allied blockade cut off all imports of raw film, partly because the chiefs of the Revolution had more urgent matters on their minds. "At first, upon Lenin's advice, only topical news films were produced."[4] Later on, a few crude agitational features were made for the troops at the front. But once the Civil War was won, the Bolshevik leaders turned to the cinema for mass education and propaganda. In 1921 Lenin said, "The cinema is for us the most important of all the arts." "Here is an instrument we must secure at all costs," said Trotsky, who wrote a famous series of articles in *Pravda* proposing that for the Czar's great chain of State-owned vodka shops there be substituted a similar chain of State-owned movie theatres, and summoning Soviet artists to use the movies to break the hold of religion over the masses.[5] At the same time, the Rapallo Treaty and the Soviet-German trade agreement linked Russia once more with the rest of Europe, and made it possible to import some badly needed raw film. (Not until 1931 did the Soviet Union begin to manufacture its own film stock.) The NEP caused exhibiting companies to spring up like mushrooms, trading in pre-Revolutionary films whose physical condition was as moth-eaten as their ideology. Most of them were shut down in 1923. The NEP men didn't venture to make any new movies. At first, the State looked abroad. In 1923, a group of foreign capitalists actually secured a joint monopoly (with Goskino, the State film trust) on all movie production. But the concessionaires failed to meet the terms, and the contract was voided. Later, Goskino negotiated with the Stinnes interests in Germany, without striking a bargain. At length, in 1924, in the seventh year of the Revolution, the Bolsheviks began systematically to attack the problem of the movies. Most of the existing producing companies were merged into a State trust called "Sovkino." With the slogan, "The Proletarianization of the Screen!," a drive was organized to form workers' film groups as a nucleus for a wide class-conscious audience. A central Council was set up, to which all scenarios had to be submitted in advance of filming, and which functioned as a censor and ideological guide. The extraordinary thing is that such steps were not taken years earlier.[6]

By 1924, the Soviet cinema was at last in process of being integrated with Soviet society. It continued, however, to follow meekly in the wake of the European industry. Most of its feature pictures were Civil War melodramas: *The Red Devils* ("constructed on the model of the detective films of America; the action takes place during the battle of the Soviet cavalry against Makhno"), *In the Service of the People, The Commander of the Ivanov Brigade,* etc.[7] A few more ambitious productions, modelled on the 'art' films of Germany, were

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made under the supervision of Anatole Lunacharsky, Commissar of Education. Lunacharsky was cultivated, Europeanized, and tolerant of radical experiments in art. But he seems to have seen in the movies only a means of giving the workers the great Russian classics. Under his influence—often he wrote the scenarios himself—the Moscow Art Theatre acted out before the camera such works as Pushkin's *The Station-Master,* Tolstoi's *Polikushka,* and Gogol's *Taras Bulba.* These films were 'artistically' set and lighted, but their only interest today is in the acting. But even while Lunacharsky was laboriously reproducing literary works on the screen, new seed was sprouting. By 1924 the underlying conditions for an esthetic upsurge had been created. (Political; Sovkino, State film council; social: formation of workers' film groups; economic: the liquidation of "War Communism," and the possibility of importing film and other supplies.) In a single year, the "new" cinema had swept Lunacharsky's realistic-theatrical tradition into oblivion, where it remained until it suited the interests of the Stalinist regime to revive it.

Seed

These new tendencies were richly varied, agreeing only on a radical overthrow of all previous conceptions. The "FEKS" group ("Factory of the Eccentric Actor") was organized in 1922, and in 1924 shifted its activities from the stage to the cinema.[8] "They base their technique on the grotesque but exact eccentrics of the circus, on the balance of acrobats. They repudiate all realism." (The influence of the circus, which combines stylization with popular appeal, has been great in the Soviet theatre and cinema.) Kozintsev, L. Trauberg and Yutkevitch were members of the FEKS group. They believed that acting, lighting, and sets should be frankly artificial and symbolic instead of imitating reality, as in Hollywood or in the Moscow studios of today. Their work has been called "expressionist melodrama." At the opposite extreme was Dziga Vertov, fanatic of the 'documentary' film, whose program was: "Only documentary facts! No illusions! Down with the actor and scenery! Long live the film of actuality!"[9] During the Civil War, Vertov made newsreels with the partisan army of Kozhevnikov. He founded his "Kino-Eye" group in 1919. For a time, he was head of the cinema department of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee.[10] Years before any one else, Vertov proclaimed the theory, and acted on it, that the arranging of the individual shots in the cutting room ("montage") is the basic creative process in cinema. He was also the first to reject the professional actor. But he carried these theories, for whose discovery he must be given historical credit, to such doctrinaire extremes that in practice he tended

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to produce films that were either flat journalism or highly mannered *tours de force*. It remained for a less fanatical and broader talent, L. Kuleshov, to first show the unlimited possibilities of montage. Kuleshov was a pupil of the pre-Revolutionary director, Baer, and, like Vertov, he made newsreels of the Red Army during the Civil War. He arrived at montage by a curious route: the shortage of film in the War years led him to experiment with making new movies by cutting up and rearranging parts of old ones. While he came to agree with Vertov on the basic importance of montage, Kuleshov opposed the "No illusions!" dogma and advocated the study of American films, especially the "Westerns" and the work of D. W. Griffith.[12] In 1920 he formed a group to work in the movies. Its most talented member was V. I. Pudovkin.

All of these tendencies were synthesized in the work of Sergei M. Eisenstein, without question the greatest master the movies have yet produced. From the FEKS group—Kozintsev and Trauberg later became his students—he took stylization and the use of symbols, from Vertov a preference for non-professional actors and an aversion to studio sets, from Kuleshov the principle of montage. He began his career in the Meyerhold Theatre, which he left in 1921 to direct the Workers Proletcult Theatre, a 'constructivist' group to the left even of Meyerhold. His last theatrical production was a play by Tretiakov called *Gas Masks*. In his own words, "The cart dropped to pieces and its driver dropped into the cinema. This all happened because one day the director had the marvelous idea of producing this play about a gas factory—in a real gas factory. As we realized later, the real interiors of the factory had nothing to do with pure theatrical fiction. The plastic charm of reality in the factory became so strong that actuality . . . took things into its own hands, and finally had to leave an art where it could not command."[13] Eisenstein joined Kuleshov and Pudovkin in their experiments with the cinema. In 1924 he directed his first film, *The Strike,* a tentative and, from what I can gather, not wholly successful picture. And in 1925 he produced *The Armored Cruiser Potemkin,* which immediately made a world-wide sensation. In this film the new tendencies found mature and powerful expression. The heroic, golden age of the Soviet cinema had begun.

Harvest

In the five years 1925-1929 the Soviet Union produced a series of movies which not only far surpassed anything that has been done there or elsewhere either before or since, but also were entirely different in technique. The esthetic theories on which these films were based have already been indicated. A few facts will give us an idea of the

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richness of this period's production. Perhaps the most indicative is that at the beginning of 1925 only 14% of the films being exhibited in the Soviet Union were native products. A year later, 50% were Soviet-made.[14] Some of the major productions may also be mentioned. Eisenstein in 1925 released *Potemkin,* in 1927 *October* (released in this country as *Ten Days that Shook the World*), in 1929 *The General Line* (*Old and New*). Pudovkin in 1926 released *Mother,* in 1927 *St. Petersburg-Petrograd-Leningrad* (*The End of St. Petersburg*), in 1928 *The Heir of Ghengis Khan* (*Storm Over Asia*). Kozintsev and Trauberg in 1927 released *The Union of the Great Cause,* in 1929 *The New Babylon.* Vertov in 1926 released *One Sixth of the Earth,* in 1928 *The Eleventh Year* and *The Man with a Camera.* A. Dovzhenko, the Ukrainian director, entering the movies late (1925) won a place beside Eisenstein and Pudovkin. In 1927 he released *Zvenigora,* in 1929 *The Only Arsenal* (*Arsenal*). Besides the work of these masters, there were many single films of the greatest interest, such as: Esther Shub's *The Downfall of the Romanov Dynasty,* Alexander Room's *Three in a Basement* (*Bed and Sofa*) and *The Ghost That Never Returns,* Victor Turin's *Turksib,* Ermler's *Fragment of an Empire,* Protazanov's *The White Eagle* (*The Lash of the Czar*), and Ilya Trauberg's *The Blue Express* (*China Express*).

For most of this period, the NEP was in force, and the dominance of the Stalin group was still contested by the other Bolshevik leaders. In this temporary relaxation of political and economic pressure, with War Communism over and the Stalin dictatorship still to begin, the cinema had its brief but intense flowering. Even after the Stalin clique liquidated the opposition and seized complete control of the State apparatus in 1928, the effects were not immediately felt in the cinema. The great silent directors were in the middle of some of their most important films and their international prestige was so enormous that even the bureaucracy trod warily—at first. And so, although literature was handed over to RAPP in 1928, not until the spring of 1930 was any systematic attempt made to bring the cinema to heel.

The Iron Age

If 1925-1929 was the Golden Age of the Russian cinema, 1930-1932 was its Iron Age. This was the period of "Military Stalinism," so to speak, when all the nation's resources, human and material, were conscripted to be hurled against the one great objective: fulfillment of the first Five Year Plan. There was forcible collectivization in agriculture and forcible proletarianization in the arts. The movies were speedily harnessed to the wheels of the Plan. The bureaucracy requi-

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sitioned propaganda to "sell" industrialization and collectivization to the masses. When it didn't get it quickly enough, it mobilized the power of the State to force through its program, crushing all tendencies which it didn't know how to use. In two years this policy had laid waste the once-flourishing cinema industry as effectively as it laid waste the fertile Ukrainian farmlands.

In the spring of 1930 a *piatiletka,* or plan, was announced for theatre, cinema, sculpture and painting. Five years of normal development in these arts were to be telescoped into the remaining three and a half years of the Plan. "It sounds crazy," wrote Walter Duranty, "but, as is often the case with the Russians, it is far less crazy than it sounds. What it really means is that there will be a considerable increase in State funds to support art—with the proviso, of course, that said art must follow Socialist lines."[15] According to the *piatiletka,* by the end of 1933 the annual production of feature films was to be increased to 350, which is more than all the studios of Hollywood combined produce in an average year. Mr. Duranty to the contrary, it *was* crazy.

The *piatiletka* for cinema was implemented by a decree bringing all branches of the movie industry—including equipment factories—under the centralized control of a new organization: Soyuzkino ("All-Union Soviet Film Trust"). At the head of Soyuzkino, Stalin placed Boris Shumiatsky, an energetic young bureaucrat. Shumiatsky's powers were limited only by a general responsibility to the Supreme Economic Council. His authority over mere directors like Eisenstein were, of course, absolute, nor was he backward about asserting it. But his chief concern was not esthetic—though, as we shall see, he had ideas here too—but administrative. His job was to rationalize the industry so that it could fulfill its fantastic production quotas. Even among their fellow bureaucrats, Shumiatsky and his aides were distinguished by the fervor with which they played at 'American efficiency'. In 1930 the chief of Amkino gave an American audience a glimpse of this dream world of 'Fordism': "As in other big industries, the business is conducted by the Film Trust on a commercial basis. . . . The expenditure on negative film for the first negative is determined with a coefficient 1-7, and on the second negative 30 percent less. . . . The norms for the personnel are fixed as follows: the director should produce in the second year of the Plan, at least one and one-half films, in the last year at least two films."[16] By now, Dovzhenko is eleven films behind his 'norm,' Pudovkin thirteen, and Eisenstein fifteen. For years Wall Street has been trying to put movie production on a 'commercial basis'. The bureaucrats have been even less successful than the bankers.

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Within a year after Soyuzkino was formed, the movie industry had slumped both qualitatively and quantitatively. It is true that there were extraordinary difficulties at that time: the introduction of sound, the economic pressure of the Plan, the necessity for a new and more difficult kind of propaganda content. But it was precisely to solve these problems that the bureaucracy had tightened its grasp on the cinema. Strangulation rather than solution was the result, however. "A few years ago," Shumiatsky admitted in the fall of 1931, "we seemed to create many big pictures. Of late, it looks as though we were creating fewer. In reality, such isn't the case. The taste of our audience has developed very fast. Yesterday's films aren't up to today's cultural standards."[17] But the decline was not an optical illusion, and its cause was not an advance in cultural standards—which had, on the contrary, rapidly deteriorated—but the policies which Shumiatsky, as the instrument of the Stalin bureaucracy, carried out in the cinema.

For the past ten years the Soviet movie directors have been struggling to solve two major problems. One is technical—the use of sound. The other is how to treat a new theme: the everyday life of the Soviet Union. These are difficult problems and, to the observer of 1930-2 it could not have been at all clear whether the failure to solve them was due to their inherent difficulties or to an unfavorable change in the social environment. But by now the historical drift is unmistakeable. Not only have the Soviet directors failed to progress towards a solution, but in recent years a definite retrogression has been noticeable.

In their 1928 manifesto, Eisenstein and Pudovkin proclaimed that montage remained the basis of cinema form, and that realistic sound effects and the literal reproduction of speech were to be condemned because "the sound would destroy the montage." Their own theory they announced in clear terms—embarrassingly clear, as it turned out later: "Only the use of sound as counterpoint against visual cutting opens up new possibilities and will further perfect the art of editing. The first experiments with sound must be directed towards its pronounced non-coincidence with the visual image. Only such an approach will bring the desired effect and in time create a new orchestral counterpoint of sight images with sound images." Sound was late in coming to the Soviet cinema. When Warner brothers electrified the world with *The Jazz Singer* in 1927, the Soviet directors had hardly begun to explore the possibilities of the silent film. The Soviet had to work out its own sound systems, since it could not afford to pay license fees for German or American systems. By 1930 workable—though little more—sound apparatus had been developed by Soviet engineers. With a great flourish, the newly formed Soyuzkino

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set about producing feature pictures in sound. There was no question what the great silent-film directors thought about sound. Eisenstein and Pudovkin re-issued their 1928 manifesto, and in a talk at the Sorbonne in 1930 Eisenstein added: "I think the '100%-all-talking film' is silly. . . . But the sound film is something more interesting. The future belongs to it."[18] Dovzhenko stated publicly: "The talking films still present a large number of deficiencies, and one of the most important and most menacing for the growth of true cinematographic culture is language—the spoken word."[19] These masters of the silent film, internationally famous and at the height of their careers, enjoyed such prestige that even the Stalinist bureaucrats, at the time, accepted their ideas on sound. "Here in Russia," Solsky, head of the Moscow Sovkino, explained, "the talkies have practically no advocates. On the other hand, I believe that sound film not only has a great future but that it signifies a revolution of film and of art altogether."[20]

The years 1930-1932 should have witnessed the laying of the foundations for a great sound cinema along the esthetic lines so universally agreed on. Instead, a strange lethargy seized on the leading directors. Eisenstein announced several grandiose projects, but finally went off to Paris—where he made a sound-short of little consequence —and thence to Hollywood and Mexico. Kovintsev and Trauberg made *Alone,* a conventional talkie. Vertov made *Enthusiasm: The Symphony of the Don Basin,* which he described as "the first forward step of the camera eye from the optic capture of the visible world, to the optic-tonal capture of the visible and audible world. It is the ice-breaker-in-chief for the sound-news film."[21] But to the dispassionate spectator, *Enthusiasm* was just a silent film, with realistic "sound effects" and a canned musical accompaniment. Pudovkin was the only one to seriously attempt to use sound experimentally, but his *Life is Beautiful* was an embarassing failure from both the esthetic and the box-office viewpoint.*

Revolution and class war were the epic themes of the great silent film. The inauguration of the first Five Year Plan in 1928 called for new themes—industrialization and collectivization—which were harder to dramatize. The only completely successful industrialization movie was made in 1928: Victor Turin's *Turksib,* a documentary film on the building of the Turkestan-Siberian Railroad. Turin, who had

* The mounting pressure on living standards as the Five Year Plan neared its end is perhaps reflected in the successive titles of this film. In December, 1930, it was called boldly, *We Live Well;* by February, 1931, this had been hedged to: *It is Necessary to Live Well;* and when the film was finally released in the summer of 1931, Pudovkin would commit himself to nothing more than *Life Is Beautiful.* Unlike consumers' goods, beauty costs nothing.

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spent some time in Hollywood, powerfully synthesized the technical proficiency of the American movies, the straight documentary subject-matter of Vertov, and the dramatic showmanship of Eisenstein. But, although his film was the sensation of the 1929-30 season in Moscow and was widely shown abroad, he has never made another movie. When last heard of (1935), he was working "in an administrative capacity."[22] The two most notable movies on collectivization were Eisenstein's *The General Line* (*Old and New*) and Dovzhenko's *Soil.* Neither was a complete success. A semi-official criticism is worth quoting: "*The General Line* took a romantic approach to collective farming and evaded the social and economic issues by artificially created trickery, such as the marriage of the bull. . . . For all its beauty, *Soil* evaded the main social issue of its theme, and the coming of the new order to the village was sensationalized by a murdering kulak rather than by the essential changes brought about by social consciousness."[22] Despite a certain lack of imagination—the critic seems to forget that the movies cannot express a politico-social situation *directly,* but only in terms of its dramatic *equivalents*—this criticism has some justice. Brilliant as these films were, for the first time, one senses a slightly dillentantish split between form and content. *Soil* was an idyll —slow, poetic, timeless, ahistorical. The struggle between the kulaks and the collective farmers was a struggle between two elemental, mythical forces rather than a conflict of economic interests. And *The General Line* gave the impression at times that Eisenstein, perhaps a little bored with the theme, was diverting himself with technical fireworks. Such episodes as the bull's wedding and the milk separator sequence—witty and eloquent in themselves—were *tours de force* whose very power disintegrated the film as a whole.

To the Shumiatsky bureaucracy, the decline in esthetic quality was less alarming than the failure to produce films of any wide popularity. At last, late in 1931, a hitherto unknown director, Nikolai Ekk, produced *Road to Life,* which was to this period as *Potemkin* was to the earlier and *Chapayev* to the suceeding period. (It may or may not be significant that this film was made for Mejrabpomfilm, owned by the Workers International Relief, and the one movie enterprise in the Union which was not controlled by Soyuzkino.) *Road to Life* owed its world-wide popularity to no esthetic pioneering—it was a 100% all-talking film—but to the gusto with which it treated an almost foolproof theme: the rehabilitation of a gang of *bezprezhorni,* or 'wild boys.' This theme also had the advantage, considerable in this 'Iron Age,' of being politically neutral. Everybody is in favor of reclaiming wayward boys—even the American Federation of Women's Clubs gave the film its official approval.[23]

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For the clue to the sudden sterility which struck the Soviet movie industry in 1930 is to be found neither in the problems of sound nor of new themes, but rather in the 'forcible proletarianization' of arts and letters which was carried on by a set of ultra-leftist sectarians, theologians, and bureaucrats. The most notorious case was the dictatorship exercised over literature, with Stalin's blessing, by the RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers), whose slogan was, "Art is a class weapon." For a time, the cinema had its own RAPP, in the Kino-Eye school of Vertov, whose documentary fanaticism seemed well adapted to turning out propaganda for the Five Year Plan. Overnight Kino-Eye was inflated into a quasi-dictatorship over the entire industry. Vertov's contempt for the 'bourgeois artificialities' of Eisenstein and Pudovkin was as violent as RAPP's for the 'estheticism' of the more talented Soviet writers. His insistence on using only unposed shots of 'real life' is echoed in such RAPPist eccentricities as Tretyakov's celebrated 'bio-interviews.' Above all, both tendencies were sectarian to the point of being totalitarian, forbidding all other schools even to exist. In 1921 the Kino-Eye group issued a manifesto demanding that only 25 percent of all movies shown in Russia "at the most" should be acted films, the rest to be documentaries. This was called "the Lenin Proportion," since Lenin had once expressed himself as especially interested in the newsreel.[24] Now this extraordinary demand was, for a time, actually honored: documentary films rose to 70% of the total output. The bad results of this line became evident sooner in the movies than in letters, and it was sooner abandoned. A critic friendly to Stalin has aptly described this Kino-Eye interlude as "another ideological expression of the severity of the first Five Year Plan."[25]

Nor were more direct expressions lacking. During the Iron Age, a theological censorship was enthroned, alert to track down the slightest trace of 'bourgeois' heresy. Every film was scrutinized closely from the standpoint of "100% class art." A movie called *Sniper,* for example, was criticised in the press because it "naievely attempted to reconcile the bourgeois-Christian precepts of pacifism with Lenin's policy of turning imperialist wars into civil wars."[26] The greatest reputations were not spared. A despatch from the Moscow correspondent of *La Revue de Cinema* (July, 1931) is illuminating: "According to certain rumors published abroad, Pudovkin, after the release of *Life Is Beautiful,* was deprived of his working card and expelled from the Party because of the 'petty-bourgeois idealism' of this film. We are authorized to expose these falsehoods, whose propagandist nature is clear when one realizes that a scenario is submitted, before it is filmed, to three different control bodies, whose function it is to pass on its

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educational, artistic and ideological value." Even if one assumes there was no basis for the rumors—which would be rash—it is hard to know which is the more shocking—the rumor or the argument against its validity. Eisenstein was also attacked. In a lengthy essay, the RAPPist Ivan Anisimov exposed the bourgeois nature of his work. And the 1932 edition of the Soviet Encyclopedia stated: "In his works, *October* and *The General Line,* Eisenstein despite his great ability, yet gave no deep analysis of the decisive stages of the Socialist Revolution and made a diversion to formal experiments. Eisenstein is a representative of the ideology of the revolutionary section of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia which is following in the path of the proletariat. . . . "[27] Just why a movie director should be expected to give a "deep analysis" of the 1917 revolution is not clear—unless because the Stalinist historians couldn't produce one themselves.

But the *cause célèbre* was the attack on Dovzhenko's *Soil. Izvestia* began it with a three-column article denouncing the film as "counter-revolutionary," "defeatist," and "too realistic" in its portrayal of the peasantry. The article was all the more damaging because it was written by Demyan Byedny,* a writer of journalistic doggerel who lived in the Kremlin and was known to be close to Stalin.[28] Other journalists took up the cry, workers' clubs passed the usual 'spontaneous' resolutions, and *Soil* was withdrawn for heavy censoring. The "realism" was deleted, as was the "counter-revolutionary scene," in which a collectivised tractor breaks down amid jeering kulaks. There were also cuts with a Will Haysian flavor: the removal of a scene in which a peasant girl tears off her clothes in despair after the death of her lover, and of a shot in which peasants, in an emergency,

* The Stalin system can always be depended on to produce a sort of perverted poetic justice. When Tairov a year or two ago produced Byedny's adaptation of the Borodin opera, *Bogatyrs,* the Central Art Commission closed down the show. Byedny had made three serious mistakes: (1) he had shown the Kiev robber bands as revolutionary elements, (2) he had represented the bogatyrs as ruling class tyrants, (3) he had satirized the conversion of Russia to Christianity. This approach would have been good doctrine under the first Five Year Plan, but Byedny had underestimated the rightward swing of the second Plan. The correct line as of 1936 was that (1) the Kiev robbers were robbers and nothing but robbers, (2) the bogatyrs were legendary Russian heroes and hence to be forgiven their class origin, (3) the Christian Church had brought Western civilization to heathen Russia.[29] Byedny was one of the founders of *Pravda;* he had been writing political doggerel for Bolshevik papers since long before the revolution; his verses had been flung broadcast from airplanes over the White lines during the civil war, and were said to have caused many desertions; he was the most popular poet in the Union; he had received both the Order of Lenin and the Order of the Red Banner.[30] But all this availed him not—any more than Tairov's international fame in the theatre availed *him.* Both were disgraced. Byedny overnight lost his position of power, and perhaps even his suite in the Kremlin!

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urinate to fill the radiator of their tractor. Dovzhenko had his defenders, but they operated on the same ultra-leftist plane as the censors. One of them praised the last-mentioned scene as "an interesting attempt to link up man organically with his machines."[31]

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The second part of this article, which carries the history of the Soviet cinema up to 1938, will appear next month.

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THOMAS MANN: MYTH AND REASON*

William Troy

II

In *The Magic Mountain* the hero is not an artist but an engineer, that is to say, a representative of one of the most characteristic and therefore most honored of the bourgeois professions. And he is even, by his own admission, a rather mediocre specimen of his class. But Hans Castorp is "a delicate child of life" for all of that. By implication the virus that had attacked Hanno Buddenbrooks, Aschenbach and all the other members of that allergic crew has now spread by contagion into every rank and department of the society: the whole bourgeois world is ready for the sanitarium. In selecting such a commonplace figure for the center of his novel, therefore, Mann is not so much deserting the artist-type of his early works as assimilating him into a more complete vision of the moral and psychological crisis which Western European man had reached in the years preceding the last Great War. In the person of Hans Castorp a whole culture makes the tragic journey upward to the high and lonely place where salvation is to be attained only after the most harrowing trials of the body and the spirit.

The structure of *The Magic Mountain,* it is true, is much complicated by the ambivalent character of its dominating symbol. Everything depends on whether the mountain is taken as a point of culmination or as a separate object in space. On the one hand, it may be equated with the spiral, the ladder, or any other of the traditional symbols of inspiration or attainment, in which case Hans Castorp's story becomes a parable capable of interpretation on all three planes of meaning. Allegorically, his ascent of the mountain corresponds to the arduous quest for certitude through the mind of a world conditioned to an absolute individualism in religion, politics, commerce, and all the other branches of life and thought. The particular nature and content of each of these categories are made amply explicit throughout the narrative. Morally, it provides an example of what Mann believes to be the proper mode of salvation—not surrender to

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one or another of the voices crying from the abyss but a still more vigorous application of the conscious mind to the problems of experience. (The arena of conflict is the brisk and sun-lit mountain-top of the mind as it had been the lush jungle of the sensibility in *Death in Venice.*) And, anagogically, it *leads* us back to the world of concrete living experience, to the world of men in action, where all the conclusions or resolutions of the mind must finally be brought to test.

But such a reading relates the work exclusively to that rather simple type of folk-myth in which the hero is not required to pass beyond the boundaries that separate the human from the divine, the terrestrial from the supernatural. And there is actually the hilarious suggestion that the mountain-sanitarium represents an *absolute* separation from the rest of the earthly planet. The mountain is a "magic" one, peopled with all sorts of elves and trolls, who play at their special variety of dice for Hans Castorp's soul. It is the old evil abstract world of the Northern imagination: the *macabre* hangs about it from beginning to end. But Mann has also been influenced by the brighter Mediterranean tradition, and we hardly need his hint that the work is epic in form to distinguish in its more important characters modern parallels for Apollo, Dionysius, Cybele, and the other incumbents of the Homeric heaven. The sanitarium is above all a kind of Mount Olympus, an international theocracy of invalids and cranks, who personify all the attitudes and points of view current in Europe of the period. It is as if we are brought to a much later stage of literary development than was represented by the primitive ritual-drama of *Death in Venice.* We are at that more civilized and more irreverent stage in which not only is the culture-hero made to cut a ridiculous figure among the gods but the gods themselves are deprived of their dignity as the projected idealisations of the race. In brief, Hans Castorp is a "strayed bourgeois" among the malingering Immortals of the bourgeois epoch.

For convenience the Olympian contestants for Hans Castorp's soul may be divided into the two groups of the Apollonian and the Dionysian—a classification that with a little effort can be made to fit each of the innumerable more abstract formulations of the dialectic conflict between reason and feeling which is the subject of the work. It enables us, for example, to bring under a single aegis two such apparently irreconcilable characters as Naphta and Settembrini. For to what does the bitter struggle between these two self-avowed exponents of reason correspond but to the tension that must always exist in the Apollonian between the form of reason and its medium or expression, between logic and rhetoric? In Settembrini, the representative of the Renaissance tradition of liberal bourgeois democracy, reason expresses itself in a language overwhelming to the young civilian from

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the lowlands. As champion of science, progress, and the glory of the individual, the heir of the Garibaldian *risorgimento* stands for values that cannot but be sympathetic to Hans Castorp; but they are rendered suspect by the diseased medium through which they are defended: rhetoric is made to seem like an elephantiasis of the intellect, in which words are swollen too large for their meaning. The humanist exalts above all else the art of letters, in which man was first able to engrave his word-symbols on stone, but it is necessary to point out to him that its tutelary gods, Thoth and Hermes-Trismegistus, became in time transformed into soul-guides in the land of the dead. So also does every one of Settembrini's most positive conceptions become transformed into its opposite, dissolve into pure nothingness, in the hard light of its historical application: the beneficent and liberating aspect of science is cancelled out by the infernal uses to which it has been put in the modern world; progress is another name for the deathward-moving direction of the romantic will; and the rights of the individual are translatable as the right of one class of individuals to exploit another and less fortunate class. If Settembrini on his mountain-top does not suspect that he is living a hundred years too late it is because of the natural coloration that language supplies the mind in its contacts with experience. But to Hans at the end he must appear for what he is—a wind-bag, an organ-grinder, a Philistine "forever playing on his penny-pipe of reason."

Yet his bombastic humanism, which is after all the reflection of a certain geniality of soul, is never so offensive as the "analphabetic barbarism" purveyed by that other distortion of the Apollonian—the little Jewish Jesuit, Naphta. Even in his name the latter gives off a suggestion of the suffocating odor left by his volatile and inflammable mixture of scholasticism and Marxism. For it is no true dialectical reconciliation between reason and nature that he achieves in his famous "synthesis" of the two doctrines: it is once again reason breeding on itself, seeking its proofs in its own already elaborated structures of dogma, without bothering to check either of these with an ever changing world of reality. It is another example of the terrible incest of the spirit. And from such a sterile union nothing can be born but the vague "Terror" that Naphta envisages for the future. (For readers living in that future, of course, the terror has long since lost its character of vagueness.) As the hyperbolic effusions of Settembrini had seemed like a burlesque of language, the traditional medium of reason, Naphta's cobwebby arguments are like a macabre parody of logic, its form. They are like those "uncanny, anti-organic, life-denying" patterns which Hans is to discover in the snowflakes later on and which will represent for him the very marrow of death. It is this genuine sclerosis of the intellect that makes him, in the last analysis,

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a more dangerous character than his opponent. After all Settembrini clings to what he calls love to the very last; his humanism is not incapable of a corrected and reordered statement; his most fundamental defect is that he is hopelessly out-of-date.

In the duel between them Mann symbolizes the exasperating dilemma of the whole bourgeois intellectual world. This may be stated historically as a death-struggle between the exhausted tradition of liberal bourgeois humanism and a reëmergent mysticism or supernaturalism. Politically, it is to be more sharply defined as between democracy and one or another form of totalitarianism. (By a brilliant stroke of economy Mann manages to telescope two of the prevalent forms of the latter—ultra-montane Catholicism and Soviet communism—in a single person; he was unable, as early as 1925, to foresee the rise of Fascism.) But ultimately there proves to be no difference between these counter-positions when their exponents are brought face to face with each other on the field of action. Neither liberal humanism nor authoritarian terrorism is able to engage the complete will of the individual: Naphta shoots himself in impotent rage, and Settembrini goes on making speeches. Neither reason nor spirit makes a successful accomodation to the realm of matter. All that we are made to understand is that Settembrini, despite his fatuous pose of martyrdom, is still in possession of some of the right values. But there is a tragi-comic dissolution of the conflict rather than a real resolution; and the realm of matter bursts in upon the inhabitants of the Magic Mountain to put both reason and spirit to flight.

Before this scene Hans Castorp himself, however, has achieved something like a resolution within the less public sphere of his own thoughts and feelings. But to understand what this has involved it is necessary to turn from the mock-epical to the mythical aspects of the work, from the Apollonian to the Dionysian elements of its hero's experience.

Unlike Aschenbach, Hans has apparently crossed the Freudian borderline at adolescence and has no trouble in rediscovering his schoolfellow Pribislav Hippe's features in the thoroughly feminine countenance of Clavdia Chauchat. Dark, brooding, and of an exotic origin, the latter represents a final accentuation of the type already encountered in the mothers of little Hanno and Tonio Kröger. At the same time she has much of the sadistic callousness of those Amazonian women who tormented Mann's earlier artist-heroes. Perhaps the lady from the "good" Russian table, with the dirty finger-nails and the habit of slamming doors, is best to be regarded as a modern avatar of Ishtar, Isis, or any other one of those old fertility goddesses who combined in themselves the two rôles of mother and mistress. In her mother-aspect Clavdia can afford to show a certain amount of tender

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sympathy for the *joli petit bourgeois* whose conception of making love is to deliver pedantic speeches in questionable French. For Hans can express his deepest needs only through a medium which permits the same sense of irresponsibility that belongs to the dream. Only in the unreal atmosphere of the "Dance of Death" can he bring himself to speak of the desires of the body, employ the intimate *tu,* and seek at least a substitute satisfaction through the vicarious instrument of language. (Something like this last would seem to be the meaning of the playful insistence on the pencil symbol.) This is altogether consistent with the attitude toward love earlier in the book, in which Hans' infatuation is registered with clinical accuracy on the mounting thermometer of his fever. And it is also consistent, of course, with that general identification of sex with disease and death, with the assembled powers of darkness, that has been a feature of Mann's writing from the beginning. But what is particularly significant here is that it is not the special artist-type but a rather commonplace product of the culture who has been incapacitated for any direct and spontaneous emotional expression. It is bourgeois man as a species that the little earth-goddess from Daghestan rejects when she puts the carnival hat on Hans Castorp's head. As mistress she must descend to the lowlands and seek out a more adequate lover.

Presented almost entirely through symbols, a remarkable composograph of Falstaff, old man Karamazov, and Zarathustra, Mynheer Peeperkorn is not only one of Mann's greatest triumphs of pure creation but one of the few real *mana*-characters in modern fiction. As the two lobes of the Apollonian brain had competed with each other in their own sterile realm, this living embodiment of the Dionysian is pitted against nature itself—as in the famous scene by the waterfall. Even his extreme verbal incoherence attests to the dynamic fluidity of a personality that is "the organ through which God consecrates his marriage with roused and intoxicated life." What Peeperkorn stands for historically, of course, is the other side of the liberal bourgeois medal—the movement of diffuse, inarticulate, and self-consuming romanticism that was the revenge of feeling on its much-vaunted and socially more respectable worship of reason in science. And he is made to serve as an awful example of the consequences of attempting to make of the romantic attitude a satisfactory attitude toward life. For the man to whom feeling is such a sacred duty that a failure in feeling amounts to nothing less than blasphemy must suffer the ignominy of his own impotence. If Naphta must turn a revolver against the head that had fabricated so much confusion, Peeperkorn must inject into his veins one of the worst poisons of that same earth whose "classic gifts" he has made his sole criteria of value. (By an ingenious piece of poetic justic the hypodermic syringe, as scientifically described, proves

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to be identical in mechanism with the phallus.) In the pact that Hans and Clavdia seal with their lips during his "Gethsemene" the cult of life and feeling becomes one with the cult of death: their loyalty is to the terrible image of death-in-life on the hospital bed. In the end Peeperkorn does not quite escape tragedy, for he cannot escape self-consciousness, that is to say, the human. "They saw the head sink sideways, the broken bitterness of the lips, they saw the man of sorrows in his guise." All his show of exuberant vitality had been but a pose, a disguise, something suspect from the beginning, and therefore a futile attempt at denying the human problem.

The same betrayal of the essentially deathward tendency of the romantic attitude is included in Clavdia's rebuke to Hans that he exists for self-enrichment rather than self-forgetfulness. No more than in the heady region of the Apollonian does Hans find solace in the feverish morasses of the Dionysian: the two cancel each other out in the altogether empty equation of death. But during his walk in the snowstorm he has his waking vision, dreams "the Mediterranean dream-poem of humanity," in which they are once again restored to their proper relationship to each other and in a much more comprehensible fashion than in the celebrated Nietzschean synthesis.

In this episode the whole pattern of the work is contained in microcosm: the process by which Hans stumbles blindly over the mountain peaks and hollows parallels minutely its antitheses, its self-contradictions, and its circular development. The blank and unstable precipitations of the atmosphere floating everywhere around him correspond to his own now quite completed sense of the terrifying metaphysical identity of all things. The immediate problem is literally one of life or death; but before this problem of the will can be solved the mind must restore its distinction between these processes which have become so hopelessly interfused. Significantly, it is only by shifting from leg to leg that he is able to generate enough warmth to maintain that "form through change of substance" which the Hofrat had offered him as the definition of organic life. But the snowflakes, condensing into their too strict geometric designs, also help through their challenge to the living principle, force him to maunder on, sense or no sense, as from a bourgeois sense of duty. In the last analysis, it is not logic but the secret and unpredictable triumph of the life-instinct over the death-instinct that leads to his vision of the dancing youths and maidens, of the ceremonial beauty of the family groups in the marketplace, and finally of the two old witches dismembering a child in the temple. It is a terrible and a beautiful dream. But for Hans it constitutes a total vision of "the human being, the delicate child of lfie, man, his state and standing in the universe." And in his acceptance of it he resolves in a flash all the warring contradictions of the conscious mind: "The

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recklessness of death is in life, it would not be life without it—and in the center is the position of the *Homo Dei,* between recklessness and reason, as his state is between mystic community and windy individualism." Since it is man alone who can perceive these counter-positions, since they exist only by virtue of the freedom of his mind, he is master over them, more "aristocratic" than either life or death. More aristocratic than death "—that is the freedom of his mind. More aristocratic than life, too aristocratic for life, and that is the piety in his heart." For this mastery the proper name is not reason but love; only through love come "form and civilization, friendly, enlightened, beautiful human intercourse—always in silent recognition of the blood-sacrifice."

And the form of *The Magic Mountain* itself finally emerges as just such a humane and loving rehearsal on the plane of the aesthetic of the struggle between the intellectual and the emotional, the abstract and the concrete, the epical and the mythical as is traced out in Hans' experience on the mountain. It is, in Mann's own words, a "dialectic novel." This is to say that it is a work which can hardly be expected to meet with the wholehearted approval of those who believe either that art should be the precise reflection of an organic culture, as in Greek tragedy or the medieval romance, or that it should provide a consistent correspondenec to some systematized body of intellectual dogma, as in Lucretius or Dante. To the first the answer must be that, in the absence of an organic cultural situation, Mann, like the other ambitious writers of his generation, had no choice but to base his structure on the tension that must always exist during the period of transition between one culture and the next. Where Pound, Joyce, Eliot, and the other heirs of the Symbolist tradition solve the problem through a formal juxtaposition of the symbols of past and present which renders any explicit comment unnecessary, Mann dissolves the modern world itself into its contradictions and makes of the dynamic interplay between them at once the structure and the meaning of his work. As for the second objection, Mann's intelligence and imaginative insight have prevented him from the first from any belief that it is possible for the artist to work out a body of absolute doctrine that has not already been thoroughly absorbed into the concrete active experience of the race. For the particular type of aesthetic solution that he offers we must turn for a precedent to such works of the past as also belong to a transitional period between two cultural epochs, to such writers as Chaucer and Cervantes, for example, whose tone, style, and mixture of literary *genres* reflect the same precariously maintained equilibrium. These comparisons must never be pressed too far, of course, but they help us realize that final evaluation of a work of literature is inseparable from evaluation of the culture of which it is an expression.

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III

In the Joseph cycle Mann reverses his procedure and throws the symbolical pattern of the myth in the forefront of his work. The progress is from the personal myth of the individual, fulfilling itself secretly beneath the social and intellectual encrustations of the bourgeois consciousness, to the *social* myth, that is, the objectified projection of the highest experience of the race on the plane of the imagination. Now the concern is not so much with the unique predicament of the modern world as with human history, not so much with European man as with man himself—"his state and standing in the universe." The work is an exhaustive formal application of the ideas of time adumbrated in *The Magic Mountain*. For time in this series is at once novelty and repetition, change and permanence, progress and retrogression. The "bottomless pit of time" invoked in the prologue is shown to reveal its own dialectic pattern when viewed with a sufficient perspective. So also in attempting to explain the motivation of an individual at any given moment of time it is not always possible to distinguish between happening and doing, between the imperative reënactment of some established form of conduct and the present deed. When the brothers throw Joseph into the well, for example, we are told that "it had come about, indeed, through them, but they had not done it, it had simply happened to them."

For Mann, in search of an appropriate myth from the past to illustrate such a reading of history, nothing could be more perfect than the story of the Hebrew Joseph. Nomadic in their habits, belonging as much to the West as to the East, and through their religion serving as a bridge between the two, the Jews take on a more universal character than that of any other race. (For the same reason Joyce makes Leopold Bloom his complete symbol of "normal" humanity.) Moreover, the long unbroken continuity of their legend and history makes possible the clearest demonstration of the ideas of time and causality that are being developed in the work. As for the particular choice of Joseph, we may observe, in the first place, that as a hero he is still safely within the confines of the human. He belongs to a late, mature, and rather precociously refined stage of primitive religion when not only has the separation between the chthonic hero-demon and the sky-god already occurred but the latter has taken on the highest spiritual attributes of the race. This is the very first note struck in the book: Joseph is rebuked by his father for slipping back into the old worship of the moon, which is bound up in the less advanced cults with the worship of the earth and the dead. And if so much is immediately made of the passing on of the "blessing"—from Abraham to Isaac, from Isaac to Jacob—it is to emphasize that we are still in the

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realm where progress is possible—the realm of the human. For what is the "pact" with God, of which we are told so much, but the pact that man makes with that part of himself which he has projected into the Deity and which later theology will erect into an absolute system of dogma? In other words, Joseph belongs to the stage at which man is still occupied in "making" his God. As the half-crazed Cardan said of himself, he is *in extremitate humanae substantiae conditionisque,* but not yet among the immortals.

Although Joseph remains a man, he is a *superior* man. And this leads to the consideration that must have been the most profound source of Mann's attraction toward him. For what is he but the ancient prototype of that modern individual whose marked superiority both of experience and insight has incurred the hostility of all right-thinking people, forced into the lonely pit of humiliation, and driven into a bitter exile? Joseph will be many things before we are through with him—slave-gardener, overseer, diplomat and prophet—but he is first and foremost "the man of words." To his exceptional gift of language he owes, in the first place, his inheritance of the "blessing" over the heads of his older brothers. To the same gift he owes the fateful interest in him taken by the Maonite merchant who leads him into Egypt, by the overseer Montakaw in the house of Potiphar, and by the impressionable Potiphar himself. And through his ability to give beautiful and prophetic expression to his dreams he will undoubtedly attract the attention of Pharaoh and earn his deliverance from the pit a second time. In Joseph the suffering artist of the early tales will undergo a purgation by which all that knowledge of the abyss, all that sympathy with disease and death becomes translated on the higher plane of moral and social responsibility.

In our very first glimpse of him Joseph betrays what we have seen as the inherent narcissism of the type. Moreover, this time it is a narcissim of the body as well as of the mind or spirit, for as a mythical character Joseph can be as beautiful as he is wise—the union of Tadzio and Aschenbach in a single person. Again physical beauty is the outward and visible sign of a superior moral and spiritual nature. As the child of Rachel and Jacob, he is the fruit of the marriage between beauty and spirit. But it is his too casual and unreflecting assumption of the rôle, the naive conviction that everyone must love him as he loves himself, the inevitable arrogance of the wearer of the ketonet that leads to his brutal treatment at the hands of the brothers. Like Aschenbach, he must pay for his sensuous relaxation into his own image—the moon; like Tadzio, he must be pushed into the earth by his more coarse-grained fellows. Before his descent into the well Joseph is hardly a person; he is no longer a child but not yet a man; he has no status in his social group. He exists only in the light of his infantile

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appreciation of himself, as the moon that he worships was supposed to mirror the light of the earth. But after his three days in the well, in darkness and surrounded by his own filth, he learns the classic lesson of humility. Through the chastisement of the self through the body, the spiritual through the physical, Joseph attains to his "second birth," which, as the first has been simply into the realm of sterile and self-contained matter, is into the realm of a more active moral and social consciousness.

Without this initial moral experience Joseph would never be able to acquire the knowledge and self-discipline necessary for the performance of his rôle. Without his successful working-out of the personal problem he would not even be able to take his place by the side of his fellows, much less lead them to a higher destiny. The point is important because it is evident that Mann does not intend us to understand that everyone in the social group is submitted to such a rigorous test of endurance. The common run of humanity, the ordinary members of the tribe, the social mass, as represented here by the brothers, are never disturbed by considerations of the relationships between God and man, the spirit and the flesh, the old and the new. Only through the intensely personal ordeal of "the marked man" among them, to recall Tonio Kröger's phrase, do they ever rise above the level of the soil which they spend their lives tilling. And it has already been suggested what unpopular figure in the modern civilized world Mann has in mind for the possible fulfillment of this rôle today. Only the artist, in a culture given over to the false and sentimental optimism of a unilinear view of progress, has anything like a sense of the responsibilities involved in being a complete human being. The artist, through his preoccupation with the aesthetic integrity of his work, has been forced into a recognition of the fundamentally dialectic nature of the processes at work in reality, of the never altogether resolved conflict between form and matter. He alone has appreciated the interrelationship between the old and the new, conservatism and radicalism, time and history. And he alone has attained to the knowledge that even the most temporary equilibrium between these processes is a matter of the most intense individual discipline.

In *Joseph in Egypt* Mann exposes his hero to the full spectacle of a great civilization in decay so that he may come to recognize that the same struggle between the old and the new from which he has just emerged in his own experience is also to be traced out in history. Indeed, the whole pattern of his adventures in the "monkey-land" of Egypt may be related to the Freudian description of the relations of the individual ego to the world. As in all the classic myths (Oedipus, Theseus, Beowulf), the hero recovers from some nearly fatal experience in infancy or youth to appear in triumph in some foreign land.

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In Freudian terms, this corresponds to the new equilibrium that has been set up in the individual psychology; and the foreignness of the material setting emphasizes the transition from the narrow world of the self to the wider world of complex social relations. It is also, in Joseph's case, into a more "advanced" world that he moves, insofar as the cosmopolitan civilization of Egypt represents a higher level of social and economic development than the pastoral life of his fathers. But it is the meaning of these two volumes that in another sense the corrupt and decadent customs of this new land betoken a much lower stage of *human* development, so that Joseph's journey into Egypt is a descent in the most literal sense of the word.

This ambiguous progress is also indicated through Joseph's transference of the object of ego-identification from the noble and high-minded Jacob to the practical and matter-of-fact merchant, and from the merchant to the ailing overseer Montkaw, who may also be taken as a kind of entrepreneur. The process of substitute-finding reaches its end in the high-priest Potiphar, before whom Joseph is finally made to have such feelings as Hans Castorp experienced before Peeperkorn. For Potiphar, the functionary without any function, the soldier who wears but cannot use the sword, the husband as pure social form, is the human zero who symbolizes the complete cancellation of experience that is evident in every phase of Egyptian life and thought. As the child of incest he is the past breeding on the past; and his emasculation stands for the empty formalism of the state-religion. For Joseph such a figure cannot stand as the center of a new equilibrium of psychological forces, as the Freudian analysis demands; he represents the pathetic and reprehensible attempt to preserve an already established equilibrium of the past. This is made very clear in the conversation between the incestuous brother-sister pair that Joseph overhears in the closed garden.

As happens when the individual cannot discover an adequate object for self-identification in the outside world he makes the fruitless attempt to lose himself in his own super-ego. Here the tragic consequences of such an attempt are brought out in the climactic episode of Joseph's affair with Potiphar's wife. Mut-en-emet, with her smouldering and angry passion, is in the direct line of Gerda Buddenbrooks, Clavdia Chauchat, and all those other feminine denizens of the abyss. But unlike Hans Castorp, who dissolved in an agony of self-abasement before the feet of his mother-mistress, Joseph exposes himself to Mut's company merely to test his own powers of endurance. The voluptuous chords of the *Liebestod* give way to a sterner music. Love is not to be accepted in terms of another and even more speedy descent into the pit. In the terrible and magnificent scene in which the unfortunate woman, after conjuring up the whole monotonous ritual of delight,

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threatens him with mutilation, Joseph is calm enough to remind her: "Yet behold, my friend, how madness reduces you for a time below the level of the human! For its advantage and special property it is to think beyond the moment and consider what comes after."

Joseph's second fall is the result of the still insufficiently purged arrogance of his spirit that is implicit in this speech. It is, as a matter of fact, the arrogance of the super-ego in playing with a situation that is more dangerous than it is willing to admit. For the didactic tone that he adopts toward the erring Mut, as is made clear through the symbolism of the two dwarfs, is really the indirect expression of the first stirrings in him of his own sexual nature. The whole purpose of his Egyptian experience has been to submit his newfound manhood to the contingencies of a particular and concrete social situation, to bring the spirit into contact with matter. But the spirit too proves to have its own kind of arrogance, to overestimate its strength in a world of unexpected subterfuges and betrayals. Those long dialogues between Joseph and Mut are more than a little reminiscent of the medieval debates between the soul and the body; and their mournful termination is a reminder that the soul cannot be too wary of its opponent.

Joseph is made to pay for his failure to discover a symbol that will enable him to give force and direction to his life. But in the final volumes we may expect that he will emerge from the Egyptian prison-house with that full knowledge and control of his world which will make him a true "nourisher" of his people. He will discover his generating and organizing symbol in the *idea* of the moral and spiritual tradition of his race.

In the purposely ambiguous title that Mann has chosen for his hero we may discover the answer to the question that must have occurred all through this discussion. Are we to understand that in taking Joseph as his arch-symbol of the responsible artist-type Mann intends that the modern artist also should be an active political leader —the shepherd of his tribe in the *literal* sense of the word? To say that such is the implication is of course to throw the door wide open to that description of the artist's role as propagandist of one or another social doctrine, to that confusion between creation and action which is enjoying such a vogue at the moment. But it is also to betray a rather profound misconception of the nature of the myth, in which everything is possible because everything exists in the pure realm of the imagination. As beauty may be united with wisdom, so also may the *Homo Dei* and the man of action reveal themselves to us in a single person. To mistake the pure world of myth for the world of contemporary reality is to mistake the potential for the actual. In the Joseph story the superior man becomes the "nourisher" of his race

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in both senses of the word, the literal and the symbolical, but it is only in the symbolical that he can become so today. It is in the sense of an example, a model, a guide to "a free and enlightened humanity" that the suffering artist of the early Mann stories achieves his epiphany in Joseph.

Is such a conception of art and the artist likely to sound too mystical for modern ears? The answer must be that it becomes mystical only if we fail to distinguish between myth as a process, as a formal pattern undergoing continuous modification and change of content, and myth as a fixed and immutable conformation of experience. In the heroic myth Mann has attempted to provide a final solution to the problem of tradition and progress—the problem that had been argued to the death by Naphta and Settembrini in *The Magic Mountain*. Perhaps the solution may be stated in terms of the old distinction between form and content: while the archetypal form of experience remains constant and invariable, its content undergoes profound differentiation from age to age, from culture to culture. Although there is no progress in the form, which is to be defined as the perpetually recurrent pattern of birth and rebirth, there is a kind of progress in the context of historical conditions in terms of which the heroic individual must work out his salvation. For the unilinear and altogether mechanical view of progress of the 19th century, Mann substitues a description that has much more in common with that of Hegel and Marx. But it must immediately be added that in the important function that he assigns to tradition he is to be sharply distinguished both from the master of German idealism and the father of economic determinism.

The great difference between these three sharers in the same general mode of thinking is to be looked for in the *ground* on which the dialectic process of history is made to occur. By ground is meant of course field of reality, and about the nature of reality there must always be considerable disagreement between philosopher and poet. For Hegelian idealism the field of reality was first and last the rational intellect, in which the Divine Idea was able in the course of the ages to progress by dialectic stages to its supreme culmination in the Prussian state. Such a description had the excellent advantage of reconciling eighteenth-century subjectivism with the emergent optimism of the nineteenth; for in the history of philosophy also it is possible to trace out a dialectic interplay between the new and the old. So also Marx, while recognizing the appropriateness of the triadic method for a revolutionary theory of political economy, was forced to redefine the ground of Hegelian metaphysics in terms more in keeping with the scientific materialism of his time. But, contrary to the often quoted statement of Engels, Marx did not actually turn Hegel "upside down";

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he merely substituted a metaphysics of matter for a metaphysics of mind; and between a philosophic materialism and a philosophic idealism there is not nearly such an important choice as many people have believed. The whole dialectic process of history is still made to occur on the ground of the rational intellect. For the 19th century scientific world-view, as has been often enough pointed out by this time, was an abstract intellectual construction. However valuable it may have been as a stimulus to practical science within its own circumscribed limits, it can lay no more claims to being a description of absolute reality than the idealist *Weltanschauung*. To Mann must be credited the abundantly fertile suggestion that only in the myth do we get the dialectic process working itself out on the *whole* ground of human reality. In the myth the interplay is between reason and nature, between the constructions of the mind and the immediate presentation of experience at any given moment of history, between the principle of form and the principle of life. The myth is the concrete and dynamic image of the human microcosm as a whole, of which the movements of the mind and the feelings are to be taken as the defining processes. It is in this sense, as Mann has recently declared, that art supplies us with "the pattern of the human." It is in Goethe's phrase, "the scale of humanity," on which all of its moral, social, and political aspirations must finally be weighed. And it is our only Absolute; "for it is pure quality; it stands for the unsatisfied, the unsatiable demand."

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